Relationship Indicators

2024 Report

National survey of the state of relationships in Australia

Full Report

Acknowledgements

We acknowledge the Wurundjeri People who are the Traditional Custodians of the lands on which our company is located, and the Traditional Custodians of country throughout Australia, where we conduct our business. We pay our respects to Elders, past, present and emerging. The Social Research Centre is committed to honouring First Nations peoples' unique cultural and spiritual relationships to the land, waters and seas and their rich contribution to society.

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Table of contents

List of figures

List of tables

List of abbreviations and terms

Australians	Relationships Australia provides services to all members of the Australian community, regardless of religious belief, age, gender, sexual orientation, lifestyle choice, cultural background or economic circumstances. Throughout our analysis we use the term Australian to refer to anyone living in Australia over the age of 18 who participated in the Relationship Indicators survey.
Carers	People who provide unpaid care and support to family members and friends who have a disability, mental illness, chronic condition, terminal illness, an alcohol or other drug issue or who are elderly.
Culturally and linguistically diverse participants	Participants who speak a language other than English at home or were born in a non-English speaking country.
Emotional loneliness	Emotional loneliness was derived by calculating the proportion of respondents who selected 'more or less', or 'Yes, I agree' to the following statements: 'I miss having people around', 'I experience a general sense of emptiness', and 'Often, I feel rejected' (Gierveld & Tilburn, 2010).
LGBTQIA+ community	Participants who identify as Gay, Lesbian, Bisexual, Queer, or prefer to self-describe when asked about their sexual orientation.
Life in Australia™	The Social Research Centre's probability-based panel used to collect the data for this report.
Longitudinal respondents	Respondents who participated in both 2022 and 2024 surveys, allowing their responses to be compared across survey waves and determine changes over time.
Most important relationship	The relationship participants indicated was their most important, meaningful and closest relationship. This can be any relationship held, not just referring to partner relationships.
Open relationship	Being in a relationship with multiple partners at once. This is sometimes known as a polyamorous relationship, consensual non-monogamous relationship or ethical non-monogamous relationship. It is different from infidelity because everyone is aware and consents.
Partner	Throughout this report we use the word partner to refer to a sexual, romantic or intimate relationship. Other terms for this could include boyfriend, girlfriend, spouse, de facto, intimate partner, husband, wife.
Relationship dissatisfaction	Respondents were asked to consider only the negative aspects of their most important relationship, and evaluate their relationship based on the following qualities: bad, lonely, discouraging, boring, empty, fragile and miserable. An additional metric for analysing relationship dissatisfaction was derived by assigning a value to each response option, ranging from 0 for 'Not at all' to 7 for 'Completely'. Response values were summed across each of the positive relationship qualities to produce an overall relationship satisfaction scale ranging from 0 to 49, with higher scores representing more negative evaluations of their closest relationship. This will be referred to as relationship dissatisfaction throughout this report and was 15.5 on average in 2024, representing generally low relationship dissatisfaction (Mattson et al., 2012).
Relationship indicators	National survey conducted by Relationships Australia to explore the experience of relationships in Australia.
Social loneliness	Social loneliness was derived by calculating the proportion of respondents who selected 'more or less', or 'No, I disagree' to the following statements: 'There are many people I can count on

	completely', 'There are plenty of people that I can lean on in case of trouble', and 'There are enough people that I feel close to' (Gierveld & Tilburn, 2010).
Statistical significance	Statistical testing was undertaken to establish whether the responses from one subgroup were statistically significantly different to other subgroups. Where differences have been noted as 'significant' or 'statistically significant', it means that a statistically significant difference at a 95% confidence level has been established.
Subjective wellbeing	Subjective wellbeing was assessed across five different statements whose scale ranged from strongly disagree to strongly agree. The statements are: 'In most ways my life is close to ideal', 'The conditions of my life are excellent', 'I am satisfied with life', 'So far I have gotten the most important things I want in life', and 'If I could have my life over, I would change almost nothing'. The responses on this scale were assigned corresponding values ranging from 1 for strongly disagree to 5 for strongly agree, with 3 representing a neutral response to the given statement. An overall subjective wellbeing score was derived by taking the mean response to each statement and summing them together (Diener et al., 1985).

Chair's foreword

As Chair of Relationships Australia Inc, I am pleased to present the findings of our 2024 Relationship Indicators research project, a comprehensive study that provides crucial insights into the state of relationships in Australia. This research builds upon our groundbreaking 2022 survey and offers a detailed examination of how relationships have evolved during this challenging period.

The findings paint a complex picture of relationships in contemporary Australia. While relationships remain fundamental to our wellbeing and social cohesion, we are seeing concerning trends that demand our attention and action. Our research reveals that 79% of Australians have faced relationship pressures in the past six months, with certain communities experiencing disproportionate challenges, and cost of living pressures remaining a significant challenge for relationships in Australia.

Also noteworthy are the increases in loneliness and relationship stress since our 2022 survey. These changes signal a broader shift in our social fabric that requires a coordinated and comprehensive response. The research highlights that relationship satisfaction has direct implications for mental health, domestic violence prevention, and community wellbeing – areas that are often viewed separately but are intrinsically connected through the lens of relationship health.
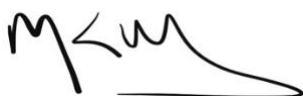
As we look to the future, this research provides a robust evidence base for developing more effective and targeted support services. The nine key recommendations outlined in this report offer a roadmap for strengthening relationship supports across Australia, from increasing funding for relationship services to addressing the growing challenge of social loneliness.

I extend my gratitude to the thousands of Australians who participated in this research, sharing their experiences and insights. Their contributions have been invaluable in deepening our understanding of contemporary relationship dynamics and challenges. I also acknowledge the dedicated work of our research team and partners at the Social Research Centre, whose expertise has ensured the rigour and reliability of this important study.

This research reinforces Relationships Australia's commitment to supporting respectful, safe, and fulfilling relationships for all Australians. As we implement these findings across our service network, we look forward to working with government, community partners, and service providers to strengthen relationship supports and contribute to a more connected and resilient Australia.

Dr Michael Kelly

Chair, Relationships Australia Inc

Introduction

The Relationship Indicators project is a nationally representative survey into the state of relationships in Australia. This survey was relaunched by Relationships Australia in 2022, and run on a probability-based online panel, Life in Australia™ managed by the Social Research Centre.

This survey explored the 'most important, meaningful' relationships held by Australians, the importance of these relationships over the course of a lifetime, and the difficulties and challenges these relationships face. The survey also delved into experiences with breakdowns in partnered relationships, and the roles that external groups (such as colleagues) play in our lives.

A new wave of the survey was conducted in 2024, building on the research conducted in 2022. This latest wave of the research continued to focus on similar themes as the 2022 research: specifically, the 'most important, meaningful' relationships held, challenges experienced and partnership breakdowns. The 2024 update also explored challenging relationships held by Australians, pressures on relationships, and how these are managed.

The aim of the 2024 research was to provide an updated view of these key measures, as well as explore how things have changed for Australians over the previous two years. The original 2022 participants were recontacted for the 2024 survey (in addition to new participants), and changes over time among this repeat participant group have been explored throughout the survey.

Executive summary

1.
Relationships with partners were by far considered the most important, closest relationships by Australians, with 61% of respondents selecting their partner as their most important, meaningful relationship.

2.
While partner relationships were by far considered the most important, meaningful relationships held by Australians, friends were also very important as one of the three closest relationships held.

3.
When asked what relationship was the most challenging, 21% of Australians indicated it was with their partner, followed by mother and father (13% and 11% respectively).

4.
The majority of Australians agreed or strongly agreed that they were satisfied with life (63%), and so far they have gotten the most important things they want in life (61%).

5.
The key pressures experienced in relationships over the past six months were cost of living (27%), and mental health pressures (26%). Other key pressures being faced were unfulfilled expectations (23%), different values / beliefs (23%), money problems (22%), study or work commitments (21%), and division of household tasks (20%). The average number of relationship pressures selected by respondents also increased from 2022 to 2024.

6.
Positively, 21% of people recorded not facing relationship pressures over the past 6 months, though this proportion decreased slightly among longitudinal respondents between 2022 and 2024.

7.
From 2022 to 2024, there was a decreasing trend among respondents reporting positive relationship traits and an increase in negative traits. Those agreeing or strongly agreeing they have fun together and communicate openly about their problems in their most important relationship decreased, while those stating they have lots of disagreements or don't spend enough time together increased.

8.
Almost a quarter of Australians indicated they agreed or strongly agreed that they felt lonely. Among longitudinal respondents, there was a 3 percentage point increase in reports of loneliness between 2022, and 2024.

9.
37.7% of Australians reported being socially lonely while 22.7% reported being emotionally lonely.

10.
92% of Australians say they feel loved.

11.
38% of Australians reported experiencing a break-up, 11% experienced a separation, and 17% experienced a divorce.

12.
When people face relationship difficulties, almost half manage on their own as opposed to seeking external support. Friends and family are most commonly reached out to for support during relationship pressures (37% and 33% respectively).

The significance of important, meaningful relationships

The first section of the survey asked people to think about the three people closest to them, and select their most important, meaningful relationships. We then asked people a series of questions exploring this relationship, including its positive and negative qualities, pressures on the relationship and strategies used to manage them, including support seeking.

Key points:

1. Relationships with partners were by far considered the most important, closest relationships by Australians, with 61% of respondents selecting their partner as their most important, meaningful relationship.

2. These findings were largely consistent when comparing our recontact participants' responses from 2022. Among this group, relationships with partners played a consistently important role, with 61% of recontact respondents selecting their partner as their closest relationship in 2022, compared to 59% in 2024.

3. While partner relationships were by far considered the most important, meaningful relationships held by Australians, friends were also very important as one of the three closest relationships held.

4. Generally, Australians rated their relationship positively when considering Friendly, Sturdy, Good, Hopeful, Enjoyable, Full and Interesting as relationship qualities, with interesting rated the lowest (50% agreed their relationship was very, extremely or completely interesting), while Australians were most positive about the friendliness of their relationships (64% agreed their relationship was very, extremely or completely friendly).

5. Australians who selected their partner as their closest, most meaningful relationship were significantly more likely to report higher relationship satisfaction for all positive relationship traits.

6. Key negative traits for family relationships were discouraging (17%), lonely (15%), and fragile (15%). These trends indicate that while family relationships hold great importance for Australians, there are potential focus areas to ensure these relationships are fulfilling and supportive.

7. When asked how safe Australians felt disagreeing with their most important relationship, the vast majority (78%) indicated they felt safe, or safe to a great extent. This decreased slightly among longitudinal respondents, however very minimally.

Key meaningful relationships held by Australians

Relationships with partners were by far considered the most important, closest relationships by Australians, with 61% of respondents selecting their partner as their most important, meaningful relationship. Relationships with mothers were also important, with 10% selecting their mother as their closest relationship, followed by 8% selecting their friend.

When thinking about the 2nd closest relationship, friends were selected most frequently (22%), followed by daughters (18%), and mothers (15%). Friends were also selected most frequently as the third closest relationship held by Australians (27%), followed by sons (13%).

While partner relationships were by far considered the most important, meaningful relationships held by Australians, friends were also very important as one of the three closest relationships held.

These findings are largely consistent when comparing our recontact participants' responses from 2022. Among this group, relationships with partners played a consistently important role, with 61% of recontact respondents selecting their partner as their closest relationship in 2022, compared to 59% in 2024.

Figure 1   The relationships people chose among their three closest
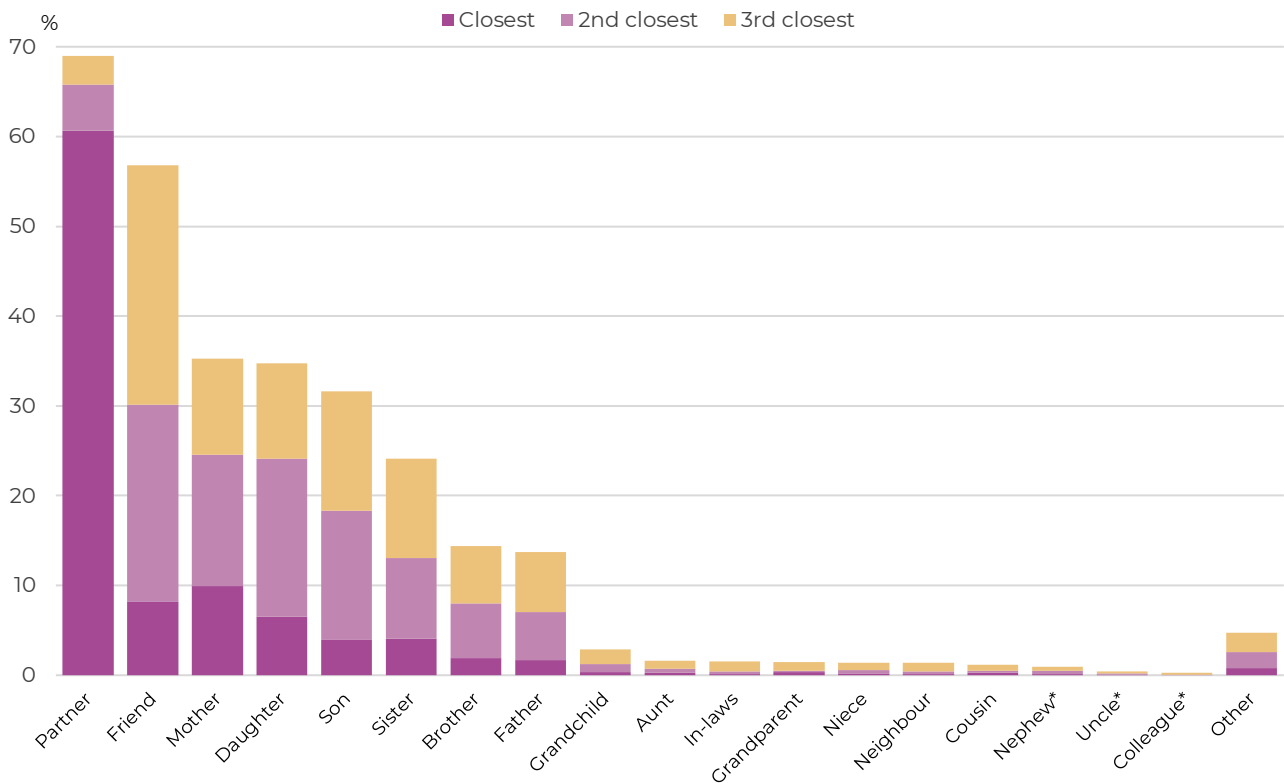
Base: Total sample (n=3,004).

Question: B1. Thinking now of the three people closest to you and their relationship to you. Firstly, we would like to ask you about your most important, meaningful relationship. Would you say the person who is closest to you is your...?

B1a. And the second closest person?

B1b. And the third closest person?

Note: * denotes less than 1% incidence in total

Differences in gender of meaningful relationships

In 2024, a question was added to the survey to understand the gender of partners and friends considered the most important, meaningful relationships.

Overall, there is a similar split in gender among partners considered the most important, meaningful relationships (52% female, 47% male, 1% non-binary / gender fluid). When a friend is the most important, meaningful relationship, that split widens slightly (52% female, 43% male, 4% non-binary / gender fluid).

Figure 3   Gender of the partner or friend people chose as their closest relationship

Relationship satisfaction

To further understand how Australians perceive and experience their most important, meaningful relationships, respondents were asked to evaluate their relationships based on positive and negative qualities.

Positive qualities

Respondents were asked to consider only the positive aspects of their most important relationship, and evaluate their relationship based on the following qualities: Friendly, Sturdy, Good, Hopeful, Enjoyable, Full and Interesting. Responses to these statements were then used to produce a score representing relationship satisfaction[1].

Generally, Australians rated their relationship positively when considering these qualities, with interesting rated the lowest (50% agreed their relationship was very, extremely or completely interesting), while Australians were most positive about the friendliness of their relationships (64% agreed their relationship was very, extremely or completely friendly).

These strength of agreement with these positive qualities differed depending on which relationship people considered their closest.

Australians generally agreed more strongly with these positive statements when partners were considered their most important 'relationship', meanwhile for family relationships, level of agreement tended to be more neutral.

Concerningly, the proportion of longitudinal respondents strongly agreeing with positive relationship traits decreased between 2022 and 2024. This trend was seen consistently across each relationship trait, and generally across relationship types.

Figure 4   Relationship satisfaction metrics by relationship type
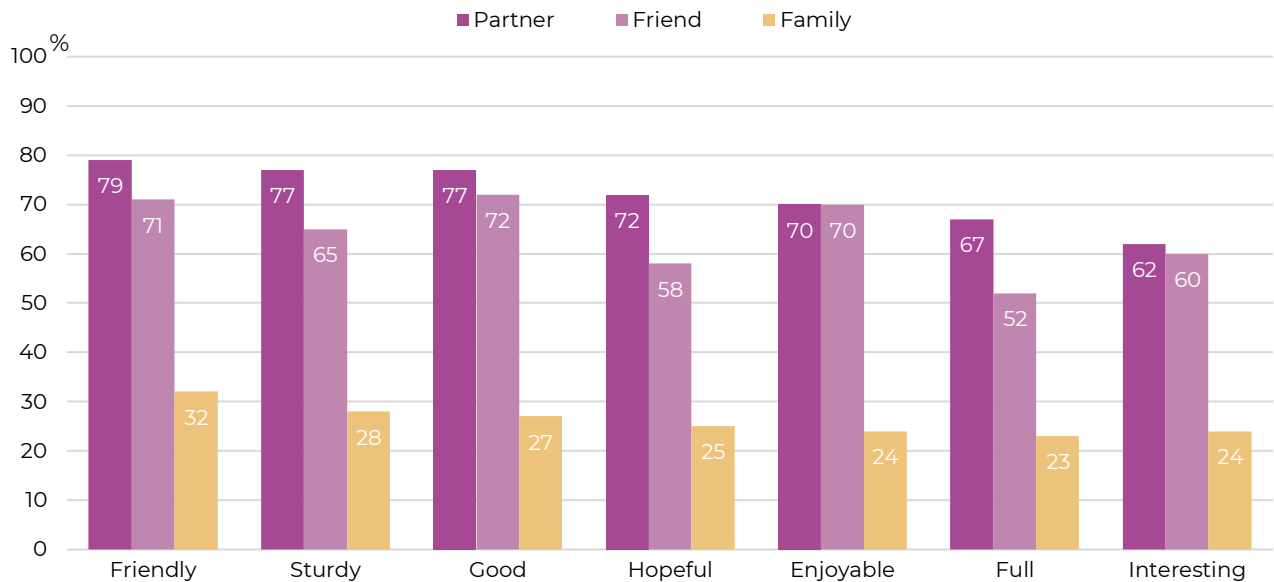
Base: Identified their most meaningful relationship; Partner (n=1779), Friend (n=256), Family (n=933).

Question: B6. Considering now only the positive qualities of your relationship and ignoring the negative ones, please evaluate your relationship on the following qualities: Our relationship is...?

Note: Chart shows NET %: Completely/extremely/very response to statement representing positive relationship qualities.

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[1] A metric for analysing relationship satisfaction was derived by assigning a value to each response option across the positive and negative qualities, ranging from 0 for 'Not at all' to 7 for 'Completely'. Response values were summed across each of the positive relationship qualities to produce an overall relationship satisfaction scale ranging from 0 to 49, with higher scores representing more positive evaluations of their closest relationship. This will be referred to as relationship satisfaction throughout this report and was 39.0 on average in 2024, representing generally high relationship satisfaction. This is based on the technique developed by Mattson et al., 2012.

Figure 5   Relationship satisfaction metrics decreased over time (longitudinal)
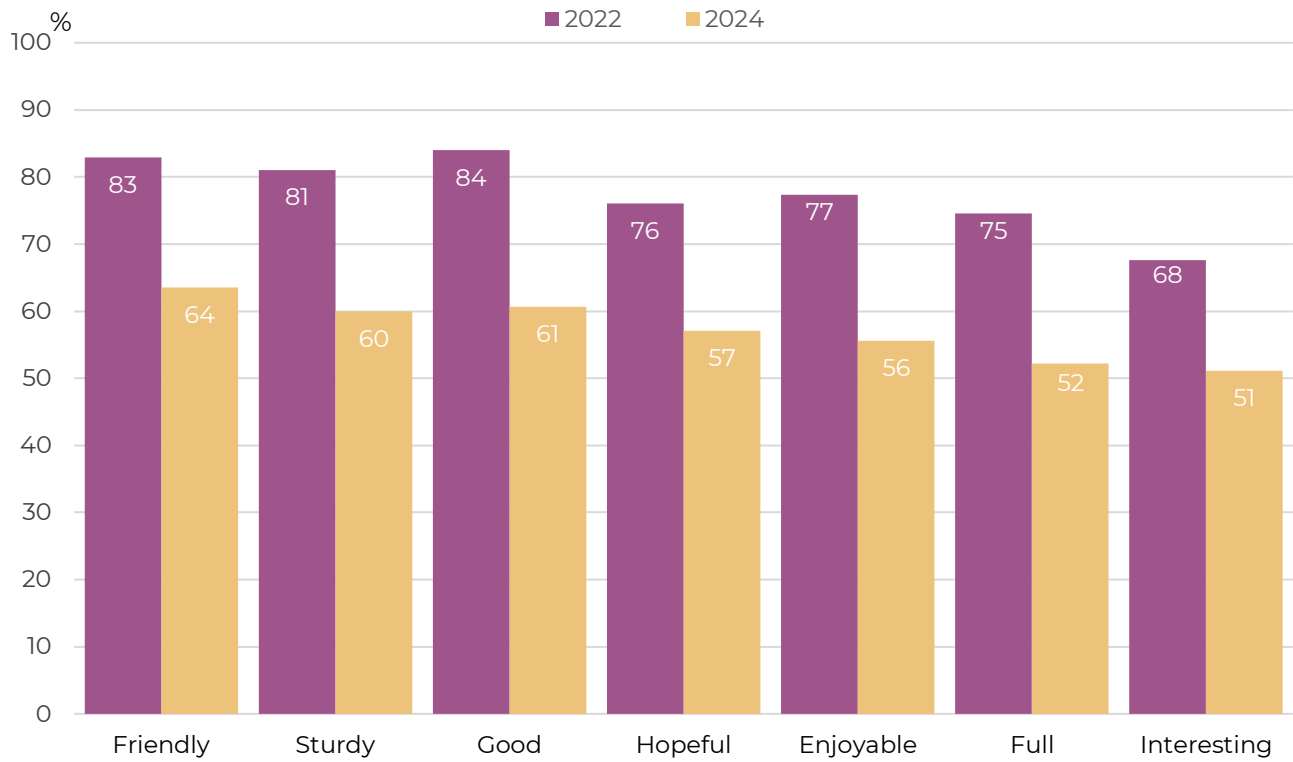
Base: Longitudinal responses that identified their most meaningful relationship; n=2212.

Question: B6. Considering now only the positive qualities of your relationship and ignoring the negative ones, please evaluate your relationship on the following qualities: Our relationship is…?

Note: Chart shows NET %: Completely/extremely/very response to statement representing positive relationship qualities.

Who feels positive?

Australians who selected their partner as their closest, most meaningful relationship were significantly more likely to report higher relationship satisfaction for all positive relationship traits. However, for those that selected their partner as both their closest and most challenging relationship, the average reported satisfaction was 49%.

Australians who do not identify as having long-term physical health, mental health conditions, a disability, or a carer are significantly more likely to report higher relationship satisfaction for all positive relationship traits, with an average of 60% reported satisfaction across all traits.

People not from culturally and linguistically diverse backgrounds were significantly more likely to report higher relationship satisfaction for the positive relationship traits friendly, sturdy, and interesting, with an average of 59% satisfaction across all traits as compared to 51% from people with culturally and linguistically diverse backgrounds.

Australians who indicated their relationship did not experience any relationship pressures in the past six months were also more likely to strongly agree with the positive relationship traits. This could indicate that positive relationship qualities are easier to focus on when there are little or no additional pressures on the relationship.

The type of pressures on the relationship also play into positive relationship qualities. Australians experiencing relationship pressures such as different values / beliefs, controlling behaviors, fear, discrimination or prejudice, and alcohol or drug use were significantly more likely to say their most important relationship didn't contain the positive qualities at all.

Meanwhile, meaningful relationships experiencing pressure from study or work commitments were significantly more likely to strongly agree their relationship was sturdy, good, friendly and hopeful.

Negative qualities

Respondents were also asked to consider only the negative aspects of their most important relationship, and evaluate their relationship based on the following qualities: Bad, Lonely, Discouraging, Boring, Empty, Fragile and Miserable[2].

In line with trends seen about positive qualities, Australians were most likely to strongly disagree that their most important relationship contained these negative qualities. 83% disagreed strongly (not at all, a tiny bit, a little) that their relationship was bad or miserable, and 79% disagreed strongly that their relationship was boring or empty.

Partnered relationships have the strongest levels of disagreement for negative traits, while family relationships had slightly higher levels of strong agreement. Key negative traits for family relationships were discouraging (17%), lonely (15%) and fragile (15%). These trends indicate that while family relationships hold great importance for Australians, there are potential focus areas to ensure these relationships are fulfilling and supportive.

Among longitudinal respondents' experiences of negative relationship traits appear to have increased from 2022 to 2024. This is most notable among most important relationships being very/extremely/completely fragile and discouraging (both 1% in 2022, and 8% in 2024), and lonely (1% in 2022 compared to 7% in 2024).

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[2] As was conducted for positive relationship qualities, an additional metric for analysing relationship dissatisfaction was derived by assigning a value to each response option, ranging from 0 for 'Not at all' to 7 for 'Completely'. Response values were summed across each of the positive relationship qualities to produce an overall relationship satisfaction scale ranging from 0 to 49, with higher scores representing more negative evaluations of their closest relationship. This will be referred to as relationship dissatisfaction throughout this report and was 15.5 on average in 2024, representing generally low relationship dissatisfaction. This is based on the technique developed by Mattson et al., 2012.

Figure 6   Relationship dissatisfaction metrics by relationship type
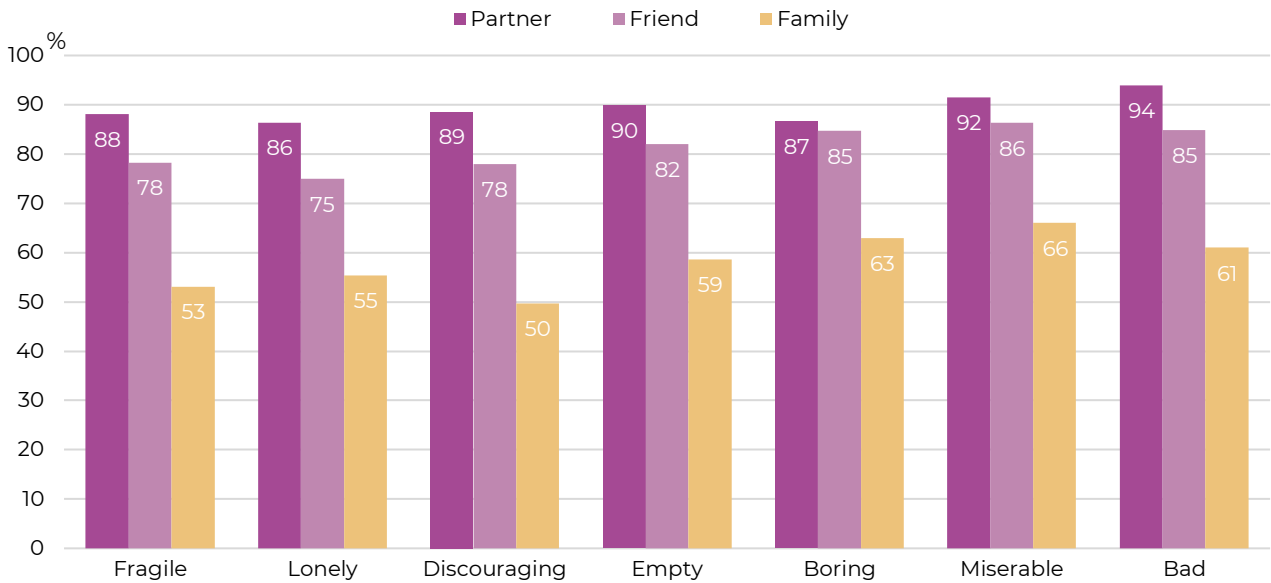
Legend: ■ Partner ■ Friend ■ Family

| Quality	Partner	Friend	Family
Fragile	88	78	53
Lonely	86	75	55
Discouraging	89	78	50
Empty	90	82	59
Boring	87	85	63
Miserable	92	86	66
Bad	94	85	61

Base: Identified their most meaningful relationship; Partner (n=1779), Friend (n=256), Family (n=933).

Question: B7. Considering now only the negative qualities of your relationship and ignoring the positive ones, please evaluate your relationship on the following qualities: Our relationship is...

Note: Chart shows NET %: Not at all/a tiny bit/a little to statements representing negative relationship qualities.

Figure 7   Relationship dissatisfaction metrics increased over time (longitudinal)
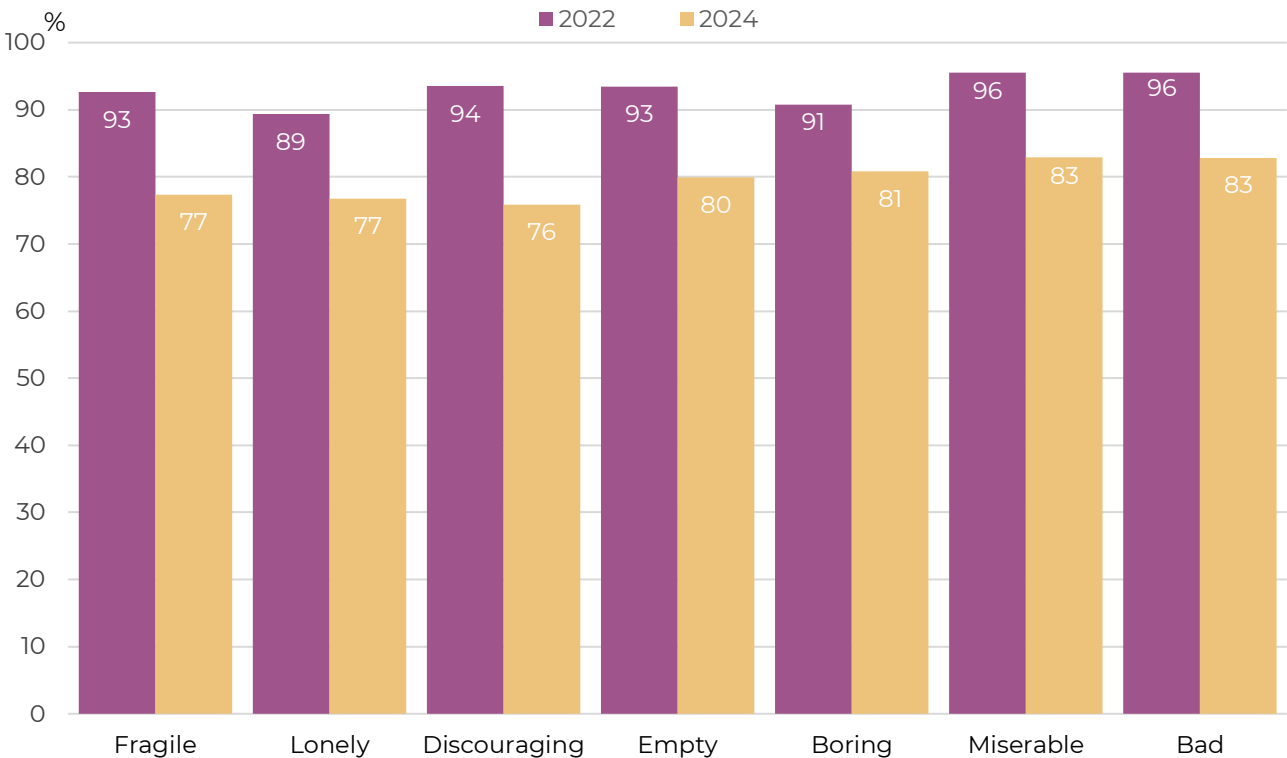
Legend: ■ 2022 ■ 2024

Quality	2022	2024
Fragile	93	77
Lonely	89	77
Discouraging	94	76
Empty	93	80
Boring	91	81
Miserable	96	83
Bad	96	83

Base: Longitudinal responses that identified their most meaningful relationship; n=2212.

Question: B7. Considering now only the negative qualities of your relationship and ignoring the positive ones, please evaluate your relationship on the following qualities: Our relationship is...

Note: Chart shows NET %: Not at all/a tiny bit/a little to statements representing negative relationship qualities.

Disagreements in relationships

When asked how safe Australians felt disagreeing with their most important relationship, the vast majority (78%) indicated they felt safe, or safe to a great extent. This decreased slightly among longitudinal respondents, however very minimally.

When people felt unsafe disagreeing with their most important relationships, they were asked what they feared when disagreeing. Key fears during disagreements included being worried it would make a fight worse (65%), and worried that concerns would be dismissed and invalidated (63%).

Australians who strongly agreed their most important relationship included positive traits, were also slightly more likely to feel safe, or a great extent safe in disagreeing with their partner. Meanwhile Australians who strongly agreed their most important relationships included negative traits, were much more likely to feel unsafe, or not at all safe. This is particularly so if they strongly agreed their relationship was miserable.

The type of fears around disagreement changes depending on the key negative relationship trait. When people strongly agree their relationship is bad or miserable, they are more likely to fear for their wellbeing during disagreements or worry disagreements could become verbally abusive or aggressive.

How can we improve relationship satisfaction?

Respondents were asked several behavioural questions to provide further context to the relationship traits. Australians were generally more likely to agree or strongly agree with more positive statements such as I know I can depend on them, I feel confident we can deal with whatever problems might come up, and we have fun together.

Australians who strongly agreed with positive relationship traits were also more likely to agree or strongly agree with positive relationship behaviours. Meanwhile people who strongly agreed with negative relationship traits also agreed or strongly agreed with negative relationship behaviours. Relationships described as fragile, discouraging, or lonely were much more likely to have lots of disagreements. Meanwhile relationships described as fragile or lonely were more likely to agree or strongly agree they don't spend enough time together.

These trends strongly indicate that behaviours established in relationships can have a notable impact on how these relationships are then perceived. Focusing on prioritising time together and communication in relationships has the potential to positively influence key traits in the relationship.

As seen with relationship traits, there is a negative trend among longitudinal respondents when reflecting on their relationship. The proportion of longitudinal respondents agreeing or strongly agreeing they have fun together and communicate openly about their problems with their most important relationship declined from 2022 to 2024. Meanwhile those agreeing or strongly agreeing they have lots of disagreements or don't spend enough time together increased.

Adding to this, the proportion of longitudinal respondents indicating there were no pressures on their relationship decreased, and the average number of pressures selected by these longitudinal respondents increased. These factors combined indicate that a changing landscape over the past two years may have introduced new pressures to relationships and created new internal challenges.

Figure 8   Relationship behaviours

Legend: Strongly disagree | Disagree | Neither agree nor disagree | Agree | Strongly Agree

Statement	Strongly disagree	Disagree	Neither agree nor disagree	Agree	Strongly Agree
We have fun together	4	8	18	40	30
We communicate openly about our problems	7	16	20	35	21
We don't spend enough time together	14	26	24	27	9
We have lots of disagreements	19	36	21	19	5
I know I can depend on them	5	7	13	31	44
I feel confident we can deal with whatever problems might come up	5	8	15	40	32

Base: Identified their most meaningful relationship, n=2.995..

Question: B10. To what extent do you agree or disagree with the following statements?

Figure 9   Relationship behaviours over time (longitudinal)

Legend: 2022 | 2024

Statement	2022	2024
We have fun together	86	70
We communicate openly about our problems	77	57
We don't spend enough time together	30	37
We have lots of disagreements	15	24
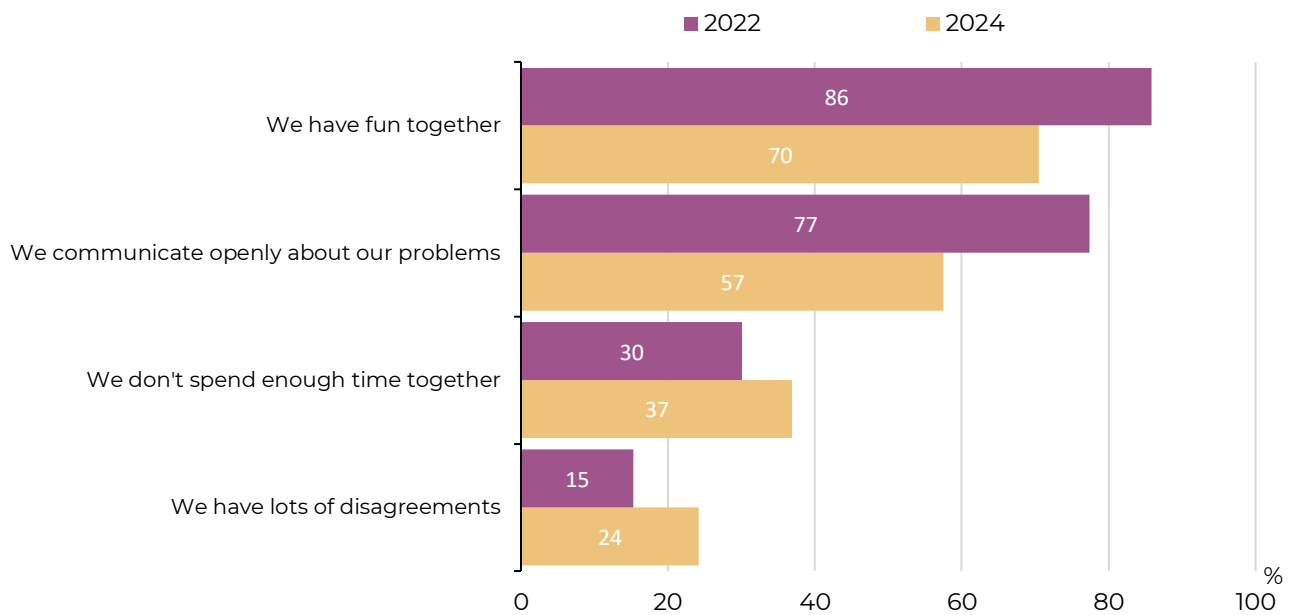
Base: Longitudinal respondents that identified their most meaningful relationship, n=2.212..

Question: B10. To what extent do you agree or disagree with the following statements?

Note: Chart shows NET %: Strongly agree/agree to statements representing relationship satisfaction. "I know I can depend on them" and "I feel confident we can deal with whatever problems might come up" not included as they were introduced in 2024.

Challenging relationships

A key addition to the 2024 survey was to ask respondents about their most challenging relationship. As relationships are often complex and multifaceted, understanding these relationships and their impact is important.

Key points:

1. When asked who was the most challenging relationship 21% of Australians indicated it was their partner, followed by mother and father (13% and 11% respectively).

2. Further indicating the complexity of relationships, there is overlap between peoples most important relationship, and their most challenging relationship. Roughly a quarter (24%) of those who indicated their partner was their most important relationship also said this was their most challenging relationship.

3. When asked to characterise their most challenging relationship, people generally indicated the relationship was conflictual (44%) or distant (42%).

4. When relationships were described as conflictual, respondents were asked to indicate what occurs when there is conflict. Most commonly, people indicated that the other person would not accept responsibility for their part in the fight (65%).

5. 28% of respondents indicated they had felt distressed, or very distressed about their most challenging relationship over the past six months. More positively, almost half of respondents felt not very, or not at all distressed over the past six months.

Types of challenging relationships

When asked who was the most challenging relationship 21% of Australians indicated it was their partner, followed by mother and father (13% and 11% respectively).

Further indicating the complexity of relationships, there is overlap between peoples most important relationship, and their most challenging relationship. Roughly a quarter (24%) of those who indicated their partner was their most important relationship also said this was their most challenging relationship.

Further to this, when people selected the same relationship as their most important and their most challenging, partner (72%) was selected 12 times more than the next main response, mother (6%).

Figure 10 The relationship people chose as their most challenging
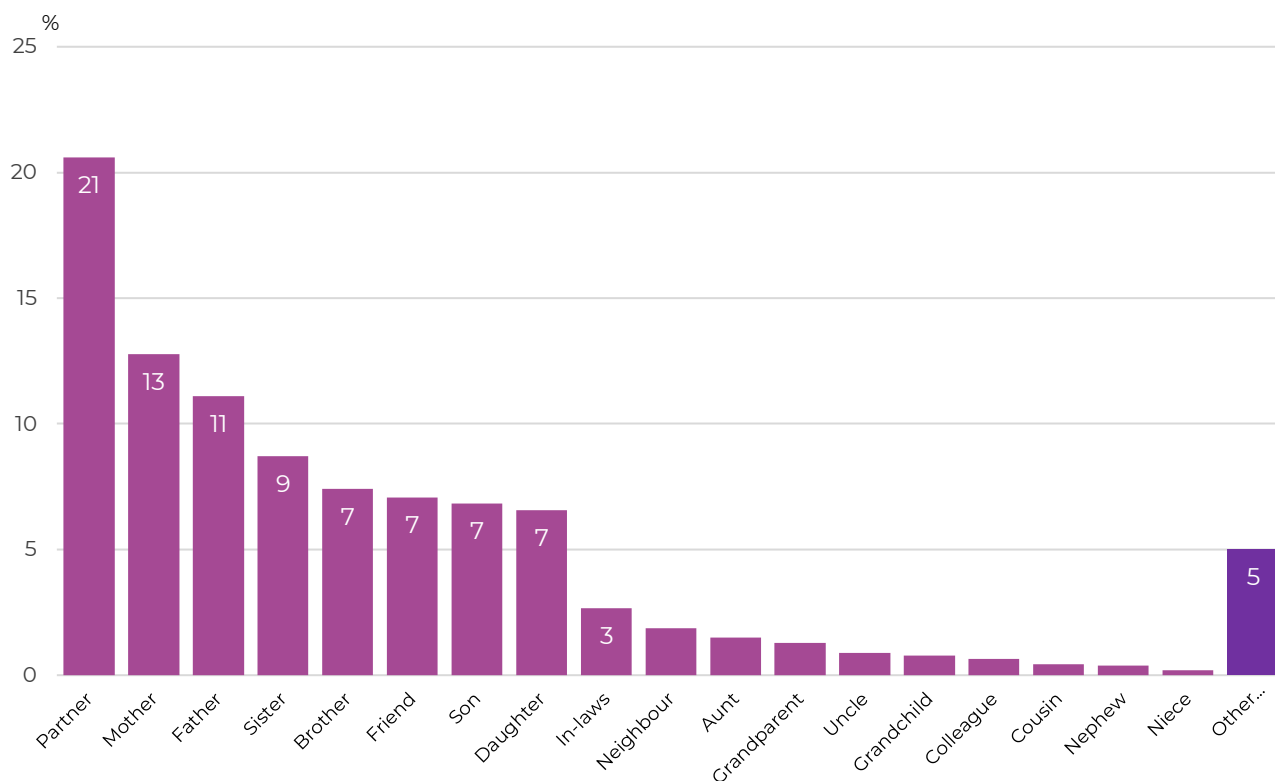
Base: All respondents; n=3,004..

Question: B1c. Who do you consider to be the most challenging relationship in your life? This can be one you previously listed or a different relationship.

Note: Unlabelled categories have an incidence of 2% or less.

When asked to characterise their most challenging relationship, people generally indicated the relationship was conflictual (44%) or distant (42%). Challenging partner relationships were more likely to be characterised as co-operative (55%). Meanwhile many challenging family relationships were more likely to be characterised as distant.

Conflictual and fearful relationships are characteristics that have potential to produce harmful impacts on people's lives. For those that selected the same person as their most challenging and their closest relationship, relationship dissatisfaction was higher than average (17.7) for relationships characterized as distant (24.2), conflictual (20.8), or fearful (20.4). A similar effect extended to subjecting wellbeing for these respondents, with conflictual (14.3), distant (13.8), and fearful (12.8) relationships producing lower a life satisfaction score than average (15.4).

Conflict in challenging relationships

To gain further insight into the nature of the challenging relationships people described as conflictual, people were asked whether they agree or disagree with statements based on Gottman's indirect measures of hostile conflict. Each statement reflected a different dimension contributing to hostile conflict:

- Defensiveness: "They do not accept responsibility for their part in the fight"

- Contempt: "I often seem to get blamed for issues"

- Criticism: "I feel criticised by them"

- Stonewalling: "They often withdraw from me and the situation"

When relationships were described as conflictual, respondents were asked to indicate what occurs when there is conflict. Most commonly, people indicated that the other person would not accept responsibility for their part in the fight (65%), indicating that defensiveness was the most common trait in conflictual

relationships for respondents. I often seem to get blamed for issues (56%) and I feel criticised by them (55%) were reported for just over half of responses, indicating that one or both blame and criticism were commonplace factors for people with conflictual relationships.

Generally, respondents with conflictual, challenging relationships indicated that at least two behaviours would occur during conflict.

Figure 11   Characteristics of conflictual relationships
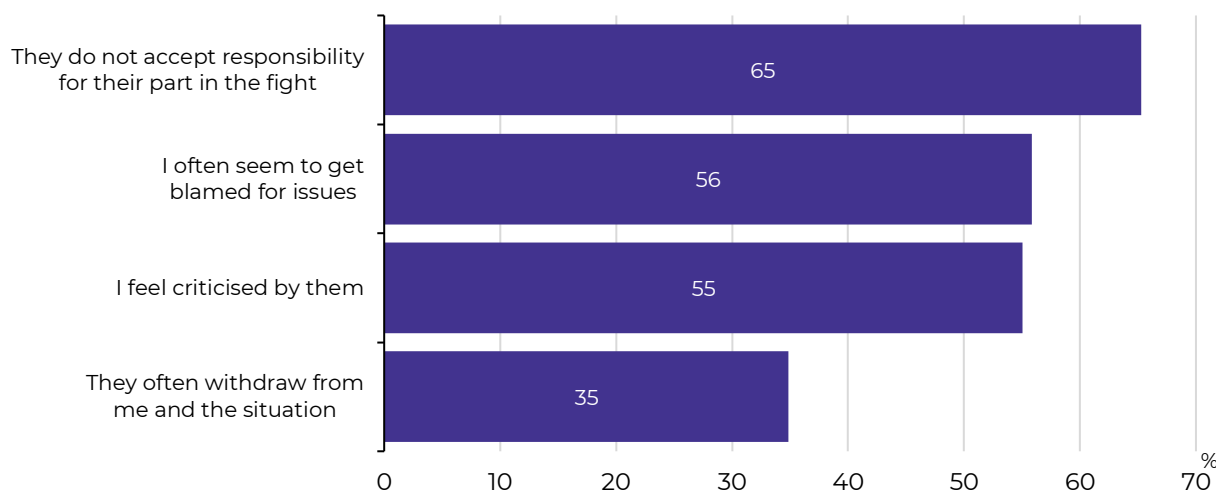
Base: Identified their most challenging relationship as conflictual; n=1212.
Question: B1e. When you have conflict in this relationship...?

Distress in challenging relationships

28% of respondents indicated they had felt distressed, or very distressed about their most challenging relationship over the past six months. More positively, almost half of respondents felt not very, or not at all distressed over the past six months.

The proportion of people feeling distressed or very distressed in these challenging relationships was higher among potentially more vulnerable groups such as those with long term physical or mental health issues, carers, and those with disability.

People who felt unsafe disagreeing with their closest relationship (58%) were far more distressed by their most challenging relationship than those who felt safe disagreeing with them (23%). This effect was consistent even when the most challenging relationship and closest relationship were the same person, and further when that person was their partner. From this we could infer that when close relationships are undermined by unsafe feelings, distress levels may generally rise across relationships and environmental contexts.

Those who were lonely were more likely to be distressed due to their challenging relationship compared to those who were not lonely, consistent across social loneliness (35% vs 23%), emotional loneliness (39% vs 24%), and self-reported loneliness (38% vs 24%).

From this, it becomes clear that the presence and quality of emotional support available to people has an impact on their levels of distress when managing challenging relationships.

Figure 12 Distress caused by challenging relationship by demographics

Demographic	%
Total	28
75 or more years	15
65-74 years	19
55-64 years	29
45-54 years	33
35-44 years	31
25-34 years	32
18-24 years	28
Non-binary / Gender fluid	
Woman or female	32
Man or male	23
Carer	40
Long-term mental health condition	44
Long-term physical health condition	39
Person with disability	41
Rest of State	27
Capital City	28
Quintile 5 - Least disadvantage	26
Quintile 4	26
Quintile 3	27
Quintile 2	28
Quintile 1 - Most disadvantage	31
LGBTQIA+	36
Straight (heterosexual)	27
CALD	28
Non-CALD	28

Base: Identified their most challenging relationship; Total (n=2897), 75 or more years (n=367), 65-74 years (n=589), 55-64 years (n=539), 45-54 years (n=461), 35-44 years (n=480), 25-34 years (n=338), 18-24 years (n=122), Non-binary / Gender fluid (n=27), Woman or female (n=1539), Man or male (n=1328), Carer (n=234), Long-term mental health condition (n=295), Long-term physical health condition (n=427), Person with disability (n=197), Rest of State (n=941), Capital City (n=1949), Quintile 5 - Least disadvantage (n=685), Quintile 4 (n=636), Quintile 3 (n=612), Quintile 2 (n=536), Quintile 1 - Most disadvantage (n=421), LGBTQIA+ (n=278), Straight (heterosexual) (n=2610), CALD (n=642), Non-CALD (n=2255)..

Question: B1f. On a scale of one to seven, where one is very distressed and seven is not at all distressed, how distressed have you felt about this relationship over the last six months? Shows the proportion of those who selected 1 – Very distressed, 2 or 3 on a 7 point scale.

Subjective wellbeing

A core element of the Relationship Indicators research is a look into subjective wellbeing. While wellbeing can be measured by looking at observable concepts such as access to housing and healthcare, subjective wellbeing refers to how people understand and evaluate their life. This can also be impacted by the perception and experience of important relationships.

Subjective wellbeing was assessed across five different statements whose scale ranged from strongly disagree to strongly agree. The responses on this scale were assigned corresponding values ranging from 1 for strongly disagree to 5 for strongly agree, with 3 representing a neutral response to the given statement (Diener et al., 1985).

An overall subjective wellbeing score was derived by taking the mean response to each statement and summing them together. The following categories can be used as a general indication of satisfaction:

- 21 to 25: Extremely satisfied
- 16 to 20: Satisfied
- 15: Neutral
- 10 to 14: Dissatisfied
- 5 to 9: Extremely dissatisfied

Key points:

1. The majority of Australians agreed or strongly agreed that they were satisfied with life (63%), and, so far, they have gotten the most important things they want in life (61%).

2. Among longitudinal respondents, these measures remained relatively consistent between 2022 and 2024, though the proportion of those agreeing or strongly agreeing that the conditions of their life are excellent slightly decreased (57% in 2022 compared to 52% in 2024).

3. Older Australians (aged 65-74 and 75+) reported higher subjective wellbeing compared to younger cohorts.

4. People who describe their challenging relationships as conflictual (15.7), distant (16.2) or fearful (14.2) reported lower subjective wellbeing compared to those who characterised that relationship as co-operative (17.2).

Satisfying relationships lead to greater subjective wellbeing

Respondents were asked if they agreed or disagreed with a series of key statements that explored their opinions around their life. The majority of Australians agreed or strongly agreed that they were satisfied with life (63%), and so far they have gotten the most important things they want in life (61%).

Among longitudinal respondents, these measures remained relatively consistent between 2022 and 2024, though the proportion of those agreeing or strongly agreeing that the conditions of their life are excellent slightly decreased (57% in 2022 compared to 52% in 2024). There were no statistically significant differences in overall subjective wellbeing, although it did decrease very slightly (16.6 in 2024 compared to 16.9 in 2022).

When reviewing key relationship traits against subjective wellbeing measures, Australians were generally more positive about their lives when they strongly agreed that positive relationship traits were present in their most important relationships. Adding to this, people who agreed strongly that negative relationship traits were present were more likely to disagree with the subjective wellbeing measures.

These trends indicate that the quality of a relationship can also impact people's subjective wellbeing, and their overall outlook regarding their own lives.

Key differences by demographic

- Older Australians (aged 65-74 and 75+) reported higher subjective wellbeing compared to younger cohorts (see chart below).

- People who had long-term physical (14.8) or mental health (13.1) conditions, disability (14.2), or who were carers (15.2) reported lower subjective wellbeing than those who did not report disability or carer status (17.3).

- Those who indicated that their most important relationship was their partner (17.5) reported higher subjective wellbeing than those with non-partner closest relationships (15.1).

- People who identified as part of the LGBTQIA+ community (14.8) reported lower subjective wellbeing than those who identified as heterosexual (16.8).

- Whilst people in the middle three socioeconomic disadvantage quintiles reported similar values, those at either extreme differed. Those in the first – i.e. most disadvantaged – quintile (15.9) reported lower subjective wellbeing whereas those in the fifth quintile (17.0) reported higher subjective wellbeing.

These findings provide an interesting lens around how subjective wellbeing can be influenced by other factors, including relationships and stage of life.

Figure 13 Subjective wellbeing by demographics

Category	Value
Total	16.5
75 or more years	18.2
65-74 years	17.3
55-64 years	16.6
45-54 years	16.1
35-44 years	16.2
25-34 years	15.9
18-24 years	16.4
Non-binary / Gender fluid	
Woman or female	16.6
Man or male	16.5
Carer	15.2
Long-term mental health condition	13.1
Long-term physical health condition	14.8
Person with disability	14.2
Rest of State	16.5
Capital City	16.5
Quintile 5 - Least disadvantage	17.0
Quintile 4	16.7
Quintile 3	16.5
Quintile 2	16.3
Quintile 1 - Most disadvantage	15.9
LGBTQIA+	14.8
Straight (heterosexual)	16.8
CALD	16.3
Non-CALD	16.6

Base: all respondents; Total (n=3000), 75 or more years (n=389), 65-74 years (n=612), 55-64 years (n=553), 45-54 years (n=471), 35-44 years (n=496), 25-34 years (n=349), 18-24 years (n=128), Non-binary / Gender fluid (n=26), Woman or female (n=1589), Man or male (n=1382), Carer (n=239), Long-term mental health condition (n=297), Long-term physical health condition (n=438), Person with disability (n=200), Rest of State (n=962), Capital City (n=2030), Quintile 5 - Least disadvantage (n=712), Quintile 4 (n=660), Quintile 3 (n=630), Quintile 2 (n=555), Quintile 1 - Most disadvantage (n=435), LGBTQIA+ (n=285), Straight (heterosexual) (n=2705), CALD (n=672), Non-CALD (n=2328).

Question: D1. To what extent do you agree or disagree with the following statements? (derived subjective wellbeing)

Subjective wellbeing was assessed across five different statements whose scale ranged from strongly disagree to strongly agree. The statements are: 'In most ways my life is close to ideal', 'The conditions of my life are excellent', 'I am satisfied with life', 'So far I have gotten the most important things I want in life', and 'If I could have my life over, I would change almost nothing'.

The responses on this scale were assigned corresponding values ranging from 1 for strongly disagree to 5 for strongly agree, with 3 representing a neutral response to the given statement.

An overall subjective wellbeing score was derived by taking the mean response to each statement and summing them together (Diener et al., 1985).

Relationships and subjective wellbeing

People who describe their challenging relationships as conflictual (15.7), distant (16.2) or fearful (14.2) reported lower subjective wellbeing compared to those who characterised that relationship as co-operative (17.2). Furthermore, the impact on subjective wellbeing extended to those in challenging relationships that reported it caused distress (14.8) as compared to those who did not report distress (17.1).

People who felt unsafe in disagreeing with their closest relationship experienced lower subjective wellbeing (14.5 vs 17.1).

This further emphasises that the nature of challenging relationships can impact subjective wellbeing in different ways, as challenging relationships described as co-operative do not exhibit the same negative wellbeing outcomes.

Relationship pressures

Relationship pressures can be internal or external factors which challenge the relationship and often require strategies to manage their effects. Respondents were asked to identify which pressures their important relationship had experienced in the last six months.

Key points:

1. The key pressures experienced in relationships over the past six months were cost of living (27%), and mental health pressures (26%). Other key pressures being faced were unfulfilled expectations (23%), different values / beliefs (23%), money problems (22%), study or work commitments (21%), and division of household tasks (20%).

2. While key pressures remained similar between 2022 and 2024 among longitudinal respondents, there were a few noted differences. Study or work commitments was previously a key pressure among this group, though decreased over the past two years. In comparison, the experience of different values / beliefs as a relationship pressure increased.

3. Positively, 21% of people recorded not facing relationship pressures over the past 6 months, though this proportion decreased slightly among longitudinal respondents between 2022 and 2024.

4. People living with their most important person experience slightly more pressures on the relationship, likely due to more greatly intertwined lives. Additionally, couples with dependent children and single parents with dependent and non-dependent children experienced more relationship pressures compared to other household types.

5. Overall people responded they were not very, or not at all distressed by these relationship pressures over the past six months (52%), however different relationship pressures caused different levels of distress.

6. There are a few key demographics who were more likely to report experiencing no relationship pressures over the past six months. Age is a key factor, with people aged 65-74 and 75+ years old notably more likely to report facing no pressures. This is possibly linked to the greater life satisfaction seen among this group of Australians.

7. When facing relationship pressures, key strategies for Australians to manage include communicating about the pressures (47%), accepting the situation / letting go (46%), and compromising or providing understanding to the other person (45%).

8. Unsurprisingly, people who indicated their mental health was poor or terrible were notably more likely to indicate it had often affected their relationship (56%).

What is placing pressure on Australian relationships?

The key pressures experienced over the past six months were cost of living (27%), and mental health pressures (26%). Other key pressures being faced were unfulfilled expectations (23%), different values / beliefs (23%), money problems (22%), study or work commitments (21%), and division of household tasks (20%).

Cost of living was added as an option to the survey in 2024, given a changing landscape of increasing interest rates and inflation. Cost of living and money problems have emerged as key relationship pressures further emphasizing these additional challenges people are facing.

While key pressures remained similar between 2022 and 2024 among longitudinal respondents, there were a few noted differences. Study or work commitments was previously a key pressure among this

group, though decreased over the past two years. In comparison, the experience of difference values / beliefs as a relationship pressure increased.

The average number of pressures also increased over the past two years for longitudinal respondents: 1.8 in 2022 compared to 2.2 in 2024.

Positively 21% of people recorded not facing relationship pressures over the past 6 months, though this proportion decreased slightly among longitudinal respondents between 2022 and 2024.

Figure 14 Pressures affecting people's closest relationship
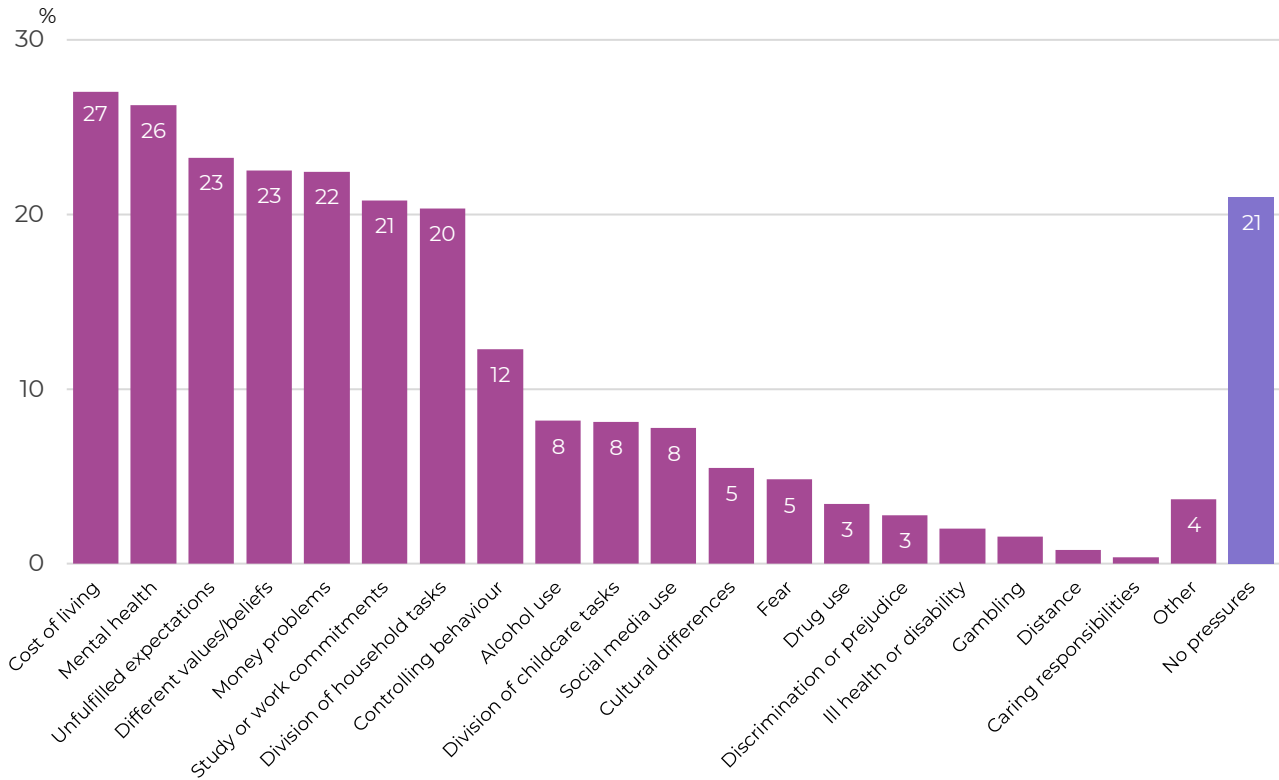
Base: Identified their most meaningful relationship, n=2995.

Question: B13 There are a range of pressures that impact all types of relationships. Which, if any, of the following pressures have impacted this relationship in the last six months?

Note: Unlabelled categories have an incidence of 2% or less.

How do circumstances affect relationship pressures?

The number of pressures experienced can be influenced by stage of relationship, such as living situation or family arrangement.

People living with their most important person experienced slightly more pressures on the relationship, likely due to more greatly intertwined lives. Additionally, couples with dependent children and single parents with dependent and non-dependent children experienced more relationship pressures compared to other household types.

Figure 15 Average number of pressures based on living arrangements
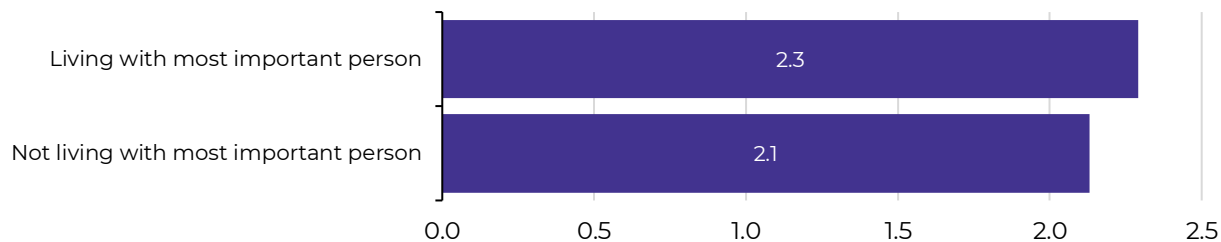
Base: Identified their most meaningful relationship. Living with most important person (n=1920), not living with most important person (n=1067).

Question: B13 There are a range of pressures that impact all types of relationships. Which, if any, of the following pressures have impacted this relationship in the last six months?

Who is facing the most relationship pressures?

People identifying as non-binary / gender fluid, part of the LGBTQIA+ community, persons with long-term mental or physical health conditions, having a disability, or a carer are all groups that experience more relationship pressures compared to other Australians.

People already experiencing external challenges may be more likely to experience relationship pressures, and possibly experience more of them.

Figure 16 Average number of relationship pressures by demographics

Category	Value
Total	2.2
75 or more years	1.2
65-74 years	1.5
55-64 years	1.8
45-54 years	2.5
35-44 years	2.7
25-34 years	3.0
18-24 years	2.1
Non-binary / Gender fluid	
Woman or female	2.4
Man or male	2.0
Carer	3.0
Long-term mental health condition	3.5
Long-term physical health condition	2.6
Person with disability	2.8
Rest of State	2.2
Capital City	2.3
Quintile 5 - Least disadvantage	2.1
Quintile 4	2.2
Quintile 3	2.5
Quintile 2	2.1
Quintile 1 - Most disadvantage	2.3
LGBTQIA+	3.0
Straight (heterosexual)	2.1
CALD	2.2
Non-CALD	2.2

Base: Identified their most meaningful relationship; Total (n=2995), 18-24 years (n=127), 25-34 years (n=348), 35-44 years (n=496), 45-54 years (n=471), 55-64 years (n=552), 65-74 years (n=612), 75 or more years (n=388); Man or male (n=1377), Woman or female (n=1588), Non-binary / Gender fluid (n=27),; Person with disability (n=200), Person with long-term physical health condition/s (n=438), Person with long-term mental health condition/s (n=297), Carer (n=239); Capital City (n=2026), Rest of State (n=961); Quintile 1 - Most disadvantage (n=434), Quintile 2 (n=553), Quintile 3 (n=631), Quintile 4 (n=656), Quintile 5 - Least disadvantage (n=713); Straight (heterosexual) (n=2699), LGBTQIA+ (n=287); Non-CALD (n=2325), CALD (n=670).

Question: B13 There are a range of pressures that impact all types of relationships. Which, if any, of the following pressures have impacted this relationship in the last six months?

The effect of pressures on relationships

Overall people responded they were not very, or not at all distressed by these relationship pressures over the past six months (52%), however different relationship pressures caused different levels of distress.

Australians who reported feeling unsafe in their closest relationship (61%) were more likely to report distress from relationship pressures in their closest relationship than those who felt safe (22%).

Unsurprisingly, people who were feeling distressed due to pressures in their closest relationship reported lower relationship satisfaction (32.0) and a higher relationship dissatisfaction (23.2) than those who were not feeling distressed (40.5 and 14.3 respectively).

Those who reported feeling distressed due to pressures in their closest relationship (14.0) reported lower subjective wellbeing on average, whereas those who were not feeling distressed reported higher subjective wellbeing (16.9). This lends insight into the broader impacts of distress due to relationship pressures, indicating that the effects are not isolated to the satisfaction of the relationship but also associated to poorer subjective wellbeing.

Figure 17 Distress due to main relationship pressure

Legend: ■ 1 – Very distressed ■ 2 ■ 3 ■ 4 ■ 5 ■ 6 ■ 7 - Not at all distressed

Category	1	2	3	4	5	6	7
Overall distress due to relationship pressure…	5	8	16	18	19	20	13
Mental health	8	10	20	18	21	18	6
Alcohol use	8	10	15	25	24	13	4
Unfulfilled expectations	6	9	19	22	16	18	10
Cultural differences	0		15	40	11	30	3
Controlling behaviour	10	8	19	22	20	14	6
Social media use	10	5	14	8	10	43	11
Different values / beliefs	1	5	12	19	23	23	16
Divison of childcare tasks	5	1	21	22	12	18	20
Division of household tasks	0	5	15	15	21	22	22
Money problems	2	8	18	21	20	18	13
Study or work commitments	0	3	8	19	17	30	21
Cost of living	3	8	15	14	21	19	19
Other	11	12	14	12	15	21	11

Base: Identified pressure affecting closest relationship the most.; n= 2272. Groups of less than 30 have been excluded.

Question: B14a. On a scale of one to seven, where one is very distressed and seven is not at all distressed, how distressed have you felt about this relationship pressure over the last six months?

Who doesn't face any relationship pressures?

There are a few key demographics who were more likely to report experiencing no relationship pressures over the past six months. Age is a key factor, with people aged 65-74 and 75+ years old notably more likely to report facing no pressures. This is possibly linked to the greater life satisfaction seen among this group of Australians.

Those who did not identify as a carer, disabled, or a person with a long term mental or physical health condition were more likely to report no relationship pressures (24%), whereas people with long-term mental health conditions (7%) and carers (10%) were less likely to do so.

People who identified as heterosexual (22%) were more likely to report no relationship pressures compared to those who identified as part of the LGBTQIA+ community (12%).

Figure 18 People not experiencing any relationship pressures by Age
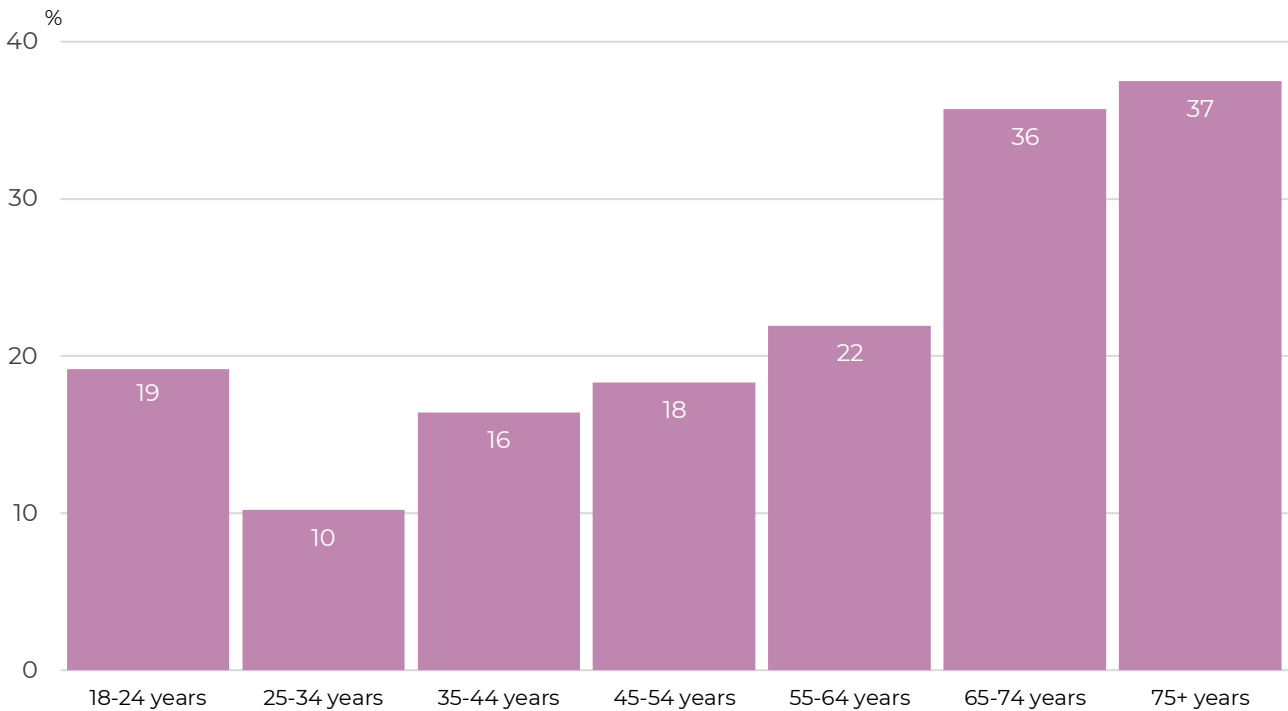
Base: Identified their most meaningful relationship; 18-24 years (n=127), 25-34 years (n=348), 35-44 years (n=496), 45-54 years (n=471), 55-64 years (n=552), 65-74 years (n=612), 75 or more years (n=388).

Question: B13 There are a range of pressures that impact all types of relationships. Which, if any, of the following pressures have impacted this relationship in the last six months?
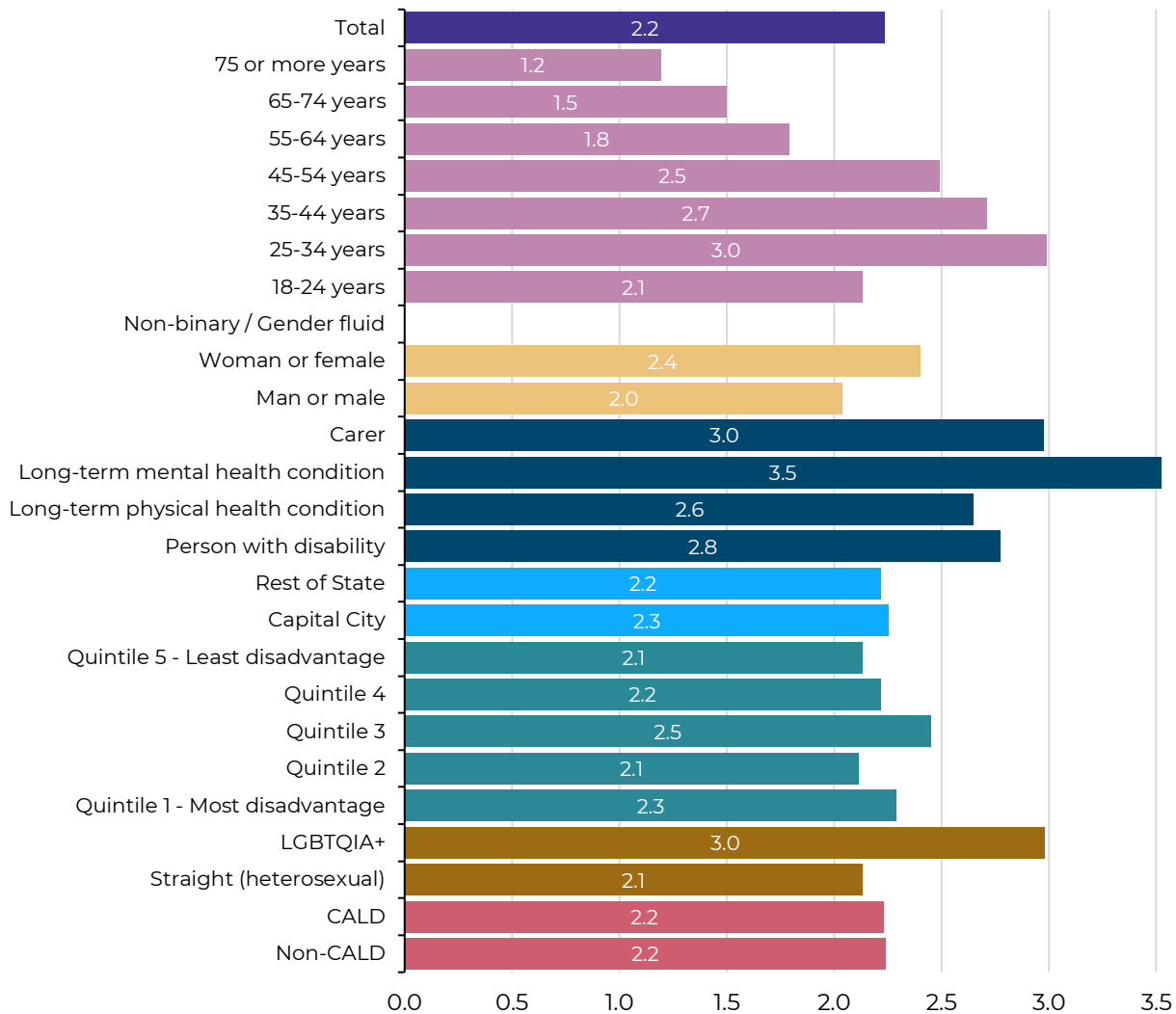
How people managed pressures

When facing relationship pressures, key strategies for Australians to manage include communicating about the pressures (47%), accepting the situation / letting go (46%), and compromising or providing understanding to the other person (45%).

These strategies appear most common among people who are not very, or not at all distressed about the pressure, whereas strategies such as seeking professional help were more likely among people feeling distressed or very distressed.

Figure 19 Strategies used to manage main relationship pressure

Strategy	Value
Communicating about the pressure	47
Accepting the situation / letting go	46
Compromising or providing understanding to them / each other	45
Self care practises	26
Providing them / each other with emotional support	25
Planning ahead	21
Avoiding the pressure	18
Separation or providing each other with space	17
Seeking professional help	13
Financial management	12
Using time management or scheduling	11
Stress management	11
Faith / spirituality	10
I am not using any strategies to manage	9

Base: Identified pressure affecting closest relationship the most., n= 2272.
Question: B15_New. What strategies, if any, are you are using to manage this pressure?
Note: Responses with incidence of 1% or less not displayed.

Mental health impacts on relationships

Given mental health is a key pressure felt on relationships, a new addition to the 2024 survey was to further explore Australians view of their mental health and how it has impacted relationships.

14% of Australians indicated their mental health was poor, or terrible, compared to 69% who indicated it was good or excellent.

Outlook improved with age, with those aged 55 and older more likely to say their mental health was good or excellent. Men were also more likely to indicate their mental health was good or excellent. In comparison, people with disabilities, long-term physical or mental health conditions, and carers were all more likely to indicate their mental health was poor or terrible.

When asked how often their mental health affected their relationship in the past six months, only 10% indicated it was often, though the split between sometimes, not often and never was similar (between 27% and 33%).

Unsurprisingly, people who indicated their mental health was poor or terrible were notably more likely to indicate it had often affected their relationship (50%).

Difficulty in communicating effectively (67%), unable to manage stress (63%), unable to be emotionally available (55%), and lower self-esteem (54%) were all key ways that mental health had impacted relationships over the past six months.

Loneliness

Loneliness remains a key point of focus in the Relationship Indicators research. Relationships Australia originally release a report exploring loneliness in the Australian population in 2018, and in 2022 incorporated this element into the Relationship Indicators research. Between 2018 and 2022, the incidence of loneliness appeared to increase, and 2024 numbers suggest this trend has not changed.

Key points:

1. Almost a quarter of Australians indicated they agreed or strongly agreed that they felt lonely. Among longitudinal respondents, there was a 3 percentage point increase in reports of loneliness between 2022, and 2024.

2. 37.7% of Australians reported being socially lonely while 22.7% reported being emotionally lonely.

3. People who selected their partner as their most important relationship were notably less likely to experience emotional loneliness or social loneliness.

4. There is a more notable difference in loneliness incidence when a person lives with their most important relationship, compared to those in different households, with the latter typically more emotionally and socially lonely (though the gap in emotional loneliness is more notable).

How many Australians feel lonely

In 2024, 24% of Australians indicated they agreed or strongly agreed that they felt lonely. Among longitudinal respondents, there was a 3 percentage point increase in reports of loneliness between 2022, and 2024.

While it is important to acknowledge the longitudinal respondents are a smaller group within the research, this increase supports findings from the last report that loneliness is increasing among Australians.

Figure 20 Prevalence of loneliness for longitudinal respondents between years
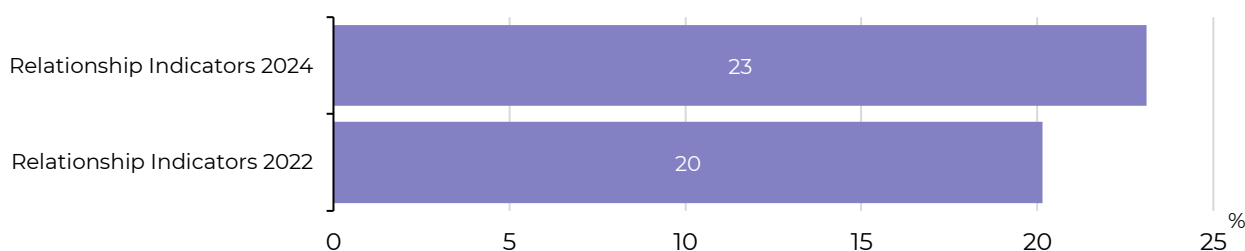
Base: Longitudinal respondents, 2022/2024 (n=2219).

Question: D3. On a scale of one to seven, where one is strongly disagree and seven is strongly agree, to what extent do you agree or disagree with the following statement? Shows the proportion of those who selected 5, 6, or 7 – Strongly agree on a 7 point scale.

The survey also asked a series of measures designed to explore social and emotional loneliness (Gierveld & Tilburn, 2010). In 2024, 37.7% of Australians reported being socially lonely while 22.7% reported being emotionally lonely.

Driving social loneliness, 59% of Australians disagreed or were neutral that there are many people they can count on completely. 55% of people disagreed or were neutral that there are enough people they feel close to.

Regarding emotional loneliness, 53% agreed or were neutral that they missed having people around, and 40% agreed or were neutral that they experienced a general sense of emptiness.

Among longitudinal respondents, the proportion of those experiencing social or emotional loneliness increased from 2022 and 2024, supporting increases seen in overall loneliness. There was a slightly higher change in social loneliness metrics, particularly for there are enough people that I feel close to.

These changes, in addition to greater pressures faced, and lower incidence of positive relationship traits, could point to a shift in the social health among Australians, and point to a need to focus on fostering positive connections.

Feelings of loneliness tend to decline with age, aligning with other trends including average relationship pressures experienced. This is more notable for emotional loneliness, while social loneliness prevalence is more consistent across the age groups.

People who selected their partner as their most important relationship were notably less likely to experience emotional loneliness or social loneliness. There is a more notable difference in loneliness incidence when a person lives with their most important relationship, compared to those in different households, with the latter typically more emotionally and socially lonely (though the gap in emotional loneliness is more notable).

The vast majority of people responded neutrally or positively to the statement I feel loved (92%). This finding was relatively stable between years among longitudinal respondents, although represented a slight decrease from 94% in 2022.

Figure 21 Prevalence of loneliness by age group
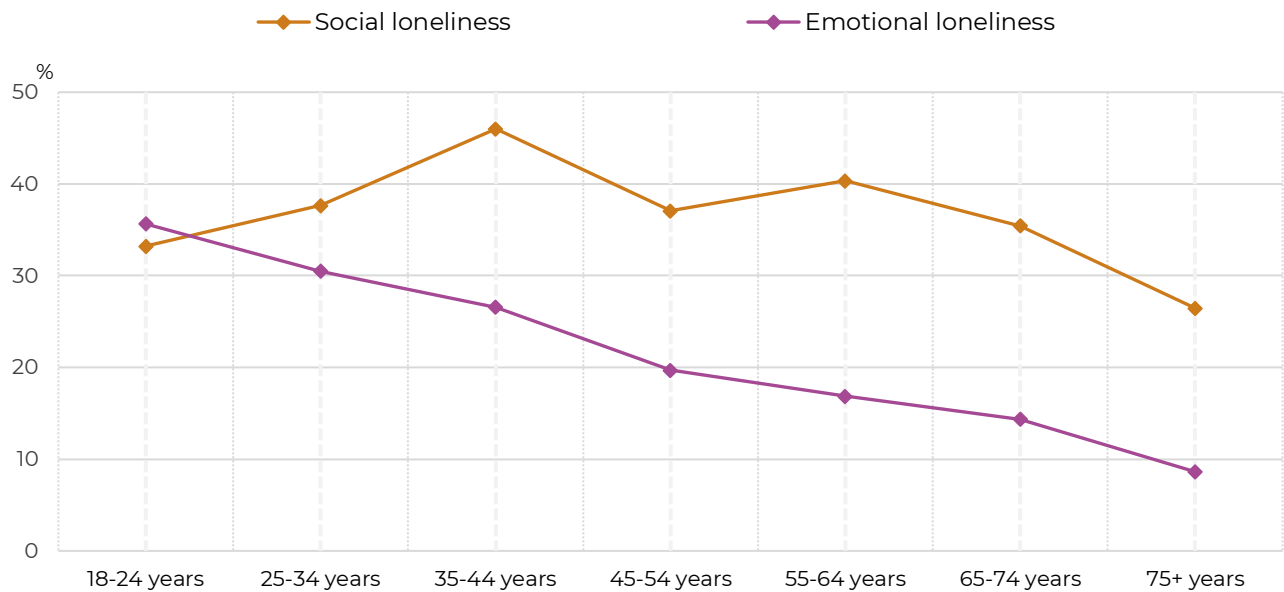
Base: All respondents, 18-24 years (n=128), 25-34 years (n=350), 35-44 years (n=496), 45-54 years (n=472), 55-64 years (n=553), 65-74 years (n=612), 75 or more years (n=391).

Question: D2. To what extent do you agree or disagree with the following statements?

Emotional loneliness was derived by calculating the proportion of respondents who selected 'more or less', or 'Yes, I agree' to the following statements: 'I miss having people around', 'I experience a general sense of emptiness', and 'Often, I feel rejected'. Social loneliness was derived by calculating the proportion of respondents who selected 'more or less', or 'No, I disagree' to the following statements: 'There are many people I can count on completely', 'There are plenty of people that I can lean on in case of trouble', and 'There are enough people that I feel close to' (Gierveld & Tilburn, 2010).

Figure 22 Prevalence of loneliness over time (longitudinal)
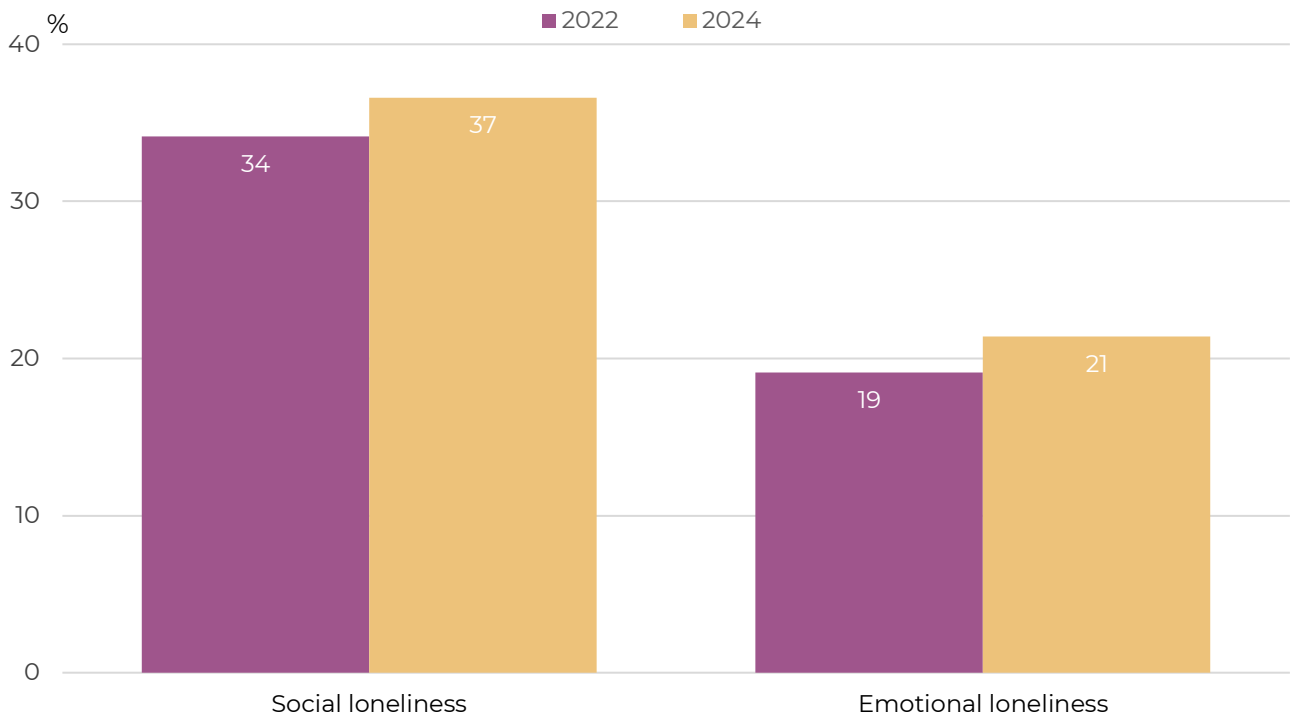
Base: Longitudinal respondents; n=2219.

Question: D2. To what extent do you agree or disagree with the following statements?

Emotional loneliness was derived by calculating the proportion of respondents who selected 'more or less', or 'Yes, I agree' to the following statements: 'I miss having people around', 'I experience a general sense of emptiness', and 'Often, I feel rejected'. Social loneliness was derived by calculating the proportion of respondents who selected 'more or less', or 'No, I disagree' to the following statements: 'There are many people I can count on completely', 'There are plenty of people that I can lean on in case of trouble', and 'There are enough people that I feel close to' (Gierveld & Tilburn, 2010).

Figure 23   Emotional loneliness by demographics

Demographic	%
Total	22.7
75 or more years	8.6
65-74 years	14.4
55-64 years	16.9
45-54 years	19.7
35-44 years	26.6
25-34 years	30.5
18-24 years	35.6
Non-binary / Gender fluid	
Woman or female	23.2
Man or male	21.4
Carer	29.3
Long-term mental health condition	48.7
Long-term physical health condition	29.8
Person with disability	37.0
Rest of State	18.9
Capital City	24.5
Quintile 5 - Least disadvantage	19.6
Quintile 4	22.0
Quintile 3	22.9
Quintile 2	25.3
Quintile 1 - Most disadvantage	23.8
LGBTQIA+	39.2
Straight (heterosexual)	20.4
CALD	28.9
Non-CALD	20.2

Base: All respondents; Total (n=3001), 75 or more years (n=391), 65-74 years (n=612), 55-64 years (n=553), 45-54 years (n=472), 35-44 years (n=496), 25-34 years (n=350), 18-24 years (n=128), Non-binary / Gender fluid (n=27), Woman or female (n=1592), Man or male (n=1382), Carer (n=240), Long-term mental health condition (n=298), Long-term physical health condition (n=438), Person with disability (n=200), Rest of State (n=962), Capital City (n=2034), Quintile 5 - Least disadvantage (n=714), Quintile 4 (n=660), Quintile 3 (n=632), Quintile 2 (n=555), Quintile 1 - Most disadvantage (n=435), LGBTQIA+ (n=287), Straight (heterosexual) (n=2707), CALD (n=675), Non-CALD (n=2329).

Question: D2. To what extent do you agree or disagree with the following statements?

Emotional loneliness was derived by calculating the proportion of respondents who selected 'more or less', or 'Yes, I agree' to the following statements: 'I miss having people around', 'I experience a general sense of emptiness', and 'Often, I feel rejected'

Figure 24 Social loneliness by demographics

Demographic	%
Total	37.7
75 or more years	26.5
65-74 years	35.4
55-64 years	40.3
45-54 years	37.1
35-44 years	46.0
25-34 years	37.6
18-24 years	33.2
Non-binary / Gender fluid	
Woman or female	34.7
Man or male	40.7
Carer	47.1
Long-term mental health condition	55.7
Long-term physical health condition	41.4
Person with disability	48.2
Rest of State	37.9
Capital City	37.6
Quintile 5 - Least disadvantage	34.7
Quintile 4	33.8
Quintile 3	37.6
Quintile 2	42.3
Quintile 1 - Most disadvantage	41.2
LGBTQIA+	41.5
Straight (heterosexual)	37.2
CALD	42.8
Non-CALD	35.7

Base: All respondents; Total (n=3001), 75 or more years (n=391), 65-74 years (n=612), 55-64 years (n=553), 45-54 years (n=472), 35-44 years (n=496), 25-34 years (n=350), 18-24 years (n=128), Non-binary / Gender fluid (n=27), Woman or female (n=1592), Man or male (n=1382), Carer (n=240), Long-term mental health condition (n=298), Long-term physical health condition (n=438), Person with disability (n=200), Rest of State (n=962), Capital City (n=2034), Quintile 5 - Least disadvantage (n=714), Quintile 4 (n=660), Quintile 3 (n=632), Quintile 2 (n=555), Quintile 1 - Most disadvantage (n=435), LGBTQIA+ (n=287), Straight (heterosexual) (n=2707), CALD (n=675), Non-CALD (n=2329).

Question: D2. To what extent do you agree or disagree with the following statements?

Social loneliness was derived by calculating the proportion of respondents who selected 'more or less', or 'No, I disagree' to the following statements: 'There are many people I can count on completely', 'There are plenty of people that I can lean on in case of trouble', and 'There are enough people that I feel close to' (Gierveld & Tilburn, 2010).

Figure 25   Self reported loneliness by demographics

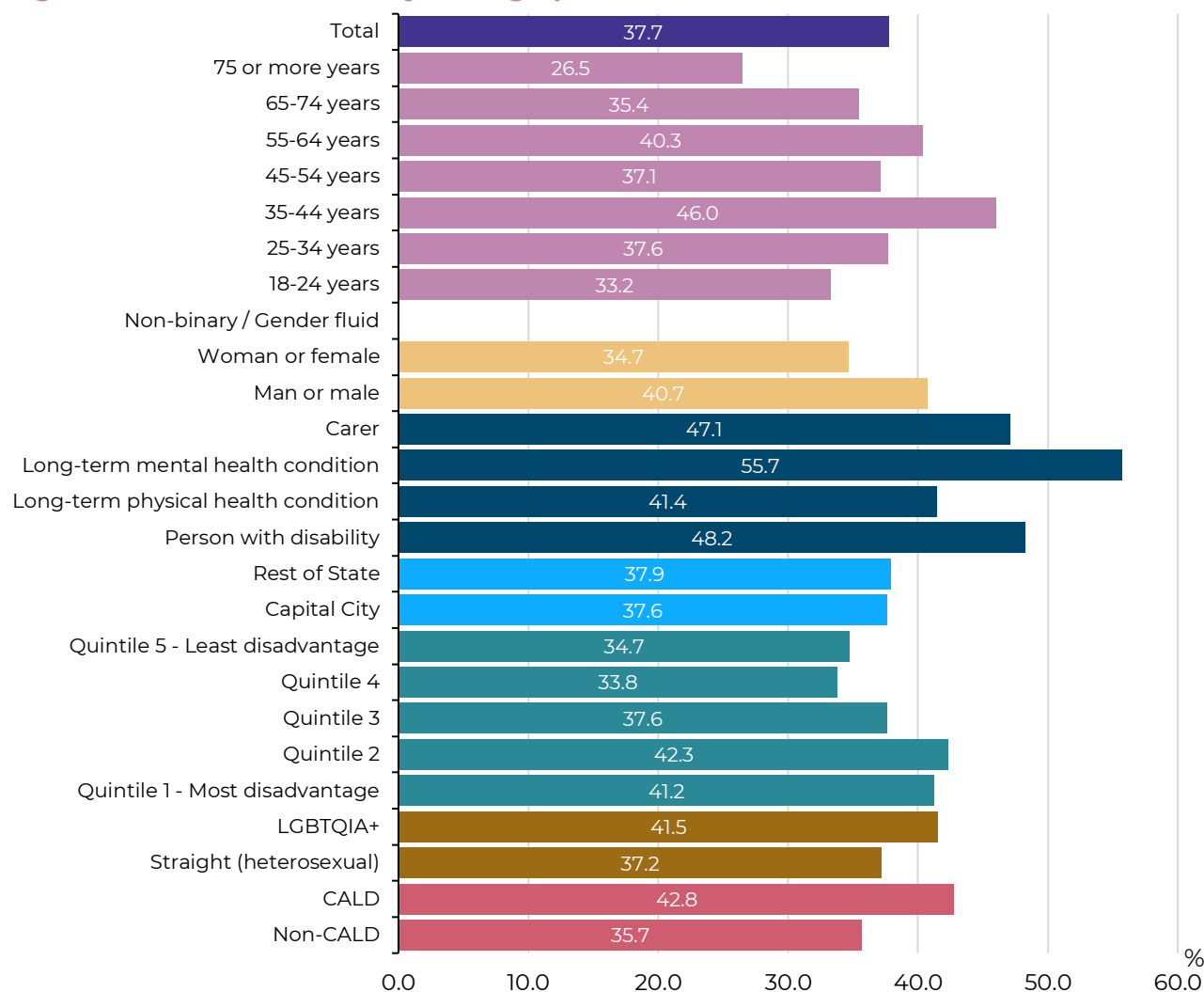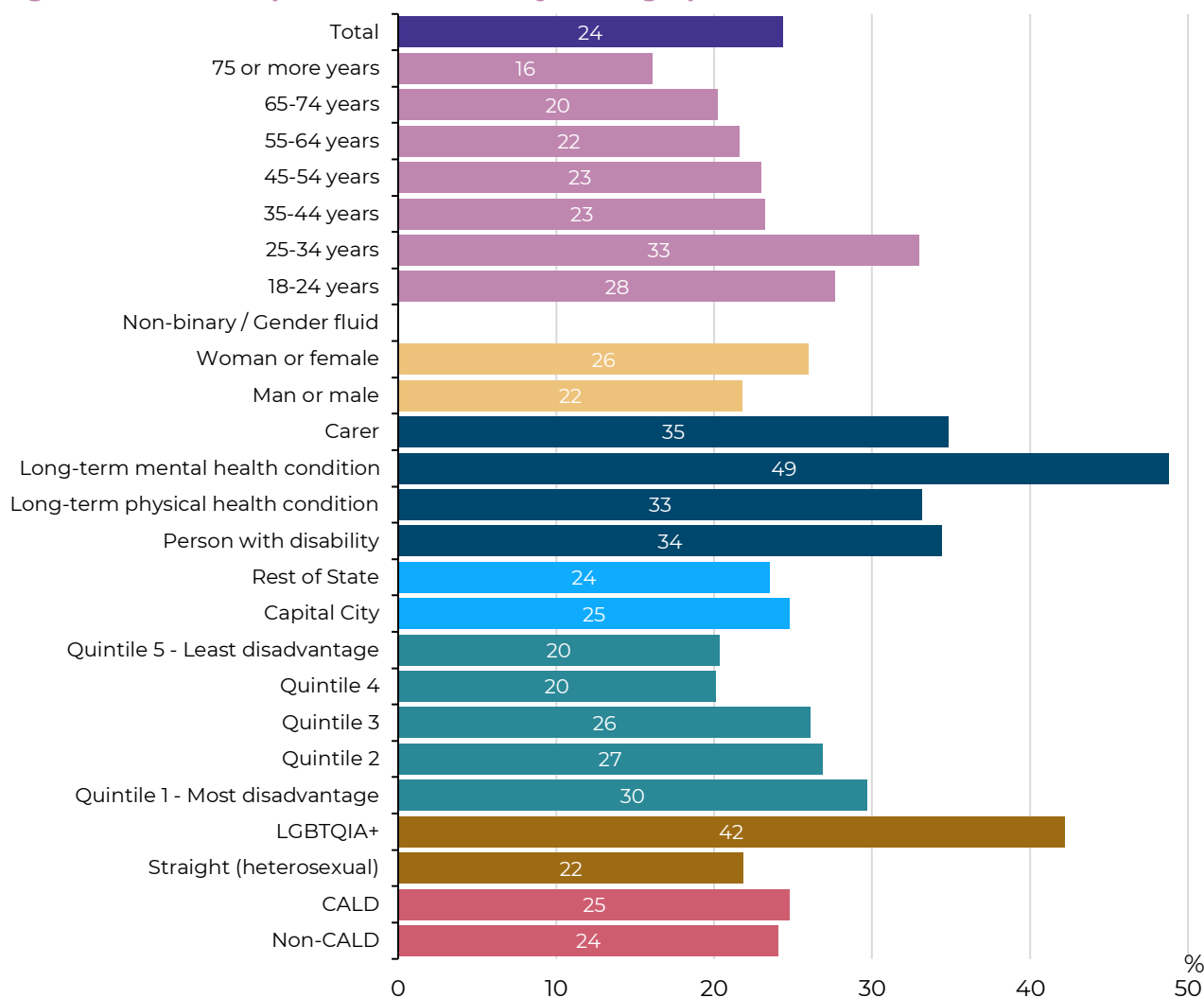| Category	Value
Total	24
75 or more years	16
65-74 years	20
55-64 years	22
45-54 years	23
35-44 years	23
25-34 years	33
18-24 years	28
Non-binary / Gender fluid	
Woman or female	26
Man or male	22
Carer	35
Long-term mental health condition	49
Long-term physical health condition	33
Person with disability	34
Rest of State	24
Capital City	25
Quintile 5 - Least disadvantage	20
Quintile 4	20
Quintile 3	26
Quintile 2	27
Quintile 1 - Most disadvantage	30
LGBTQIA+	42
Straight (heterosexual)	22
CALD	25
Non-CALD	24

Base: All respondents; Total (n=3004), 75 or more years (n=391), 65-74 years (n=612), 55-64 years (n=553), 45-54 years (n=472), 35-44 years (n=496), 25-34 years (n=350), 18-24 years (n=128), Non-binary / Gender fluid (n=27), Woman or female (n=1592), Man or male (n=1382), Carer (n=240), Long-term mental health condition (n=298), Long-term physical health condition (n=438), Person with disability (n=200), Rest of State (n=962), Capital City (n=2034), Quintile 5 - Least disadvantage (n=714), Quintile 4 (n=660), Quintile 3 (n=632), Quintile 2 (n=555), Quintile 1 - Most disadvantage (n=435), LGBTQIA+ (n=287), Straight (heterosexual) (n=2707), CALD (n=675), Non-CALD (n=2329).

Question: D3. On a scale of one to seven, where one is strongly disagree and seven is strongly agree, to what extent do you agree or disagree with the following statement? - I often feel very lonely

The impact of loneliness

Given the continued increase in experiences of loneliness among Australians, we further explored how these feelings impact other areas of people's lives, and relationships. All three of the loneliness measures had significant impacts across a range of outcomes, which highlight its impact on people's lives and point to areas for intervention when trying to address the loneliness epidemic in Australia.

Compared to those who were not socially lonely, people who were socially lonely reported:

- Lower subjective wellbeing (14.3 vs 17.9)

- Lower relationship satisfaction (35.0 vs 41.4)

- Higher relationship dissatisfaction (18.7 vs 13.6)

- Higher likelihood of poor mental health (23% vs 8%)

- Higher likelihood of feeling distressed in challenging relationships (35% vs 23%)

- Higher likelihood of feeling unsafe disagreeing with closest relationship (19% vs 8%)

- Higher likelihood of feeling distressed due to relationship pressures (36% vs 23%)

Compared to those who were not emotionally lonely, people who were emotionally lonely reported:

- Lower subjective wellbeing (13.0 vs 17.5)
- Lower relationship satisfaction (34.4 vs 40.3)
- Higher relationship dissatisfaction (20.7 vs 14.0)
- Higher likelihood of poor mental health (33% vs 8%)
- Higher likelihood of feeling distressed in challenging relationships (39% vs 24%)
- Higher likelihood of feeling unsafe disagreeing with closest relationship (22% vs 9%)
- Higher likelihood of feeling distressed due to relationship pressures (39% vs 25%)

Compared to those who did not report they often felt lonely, people who did often feel lonely reported:

- Lower subjective wellbeing (13.3 vs 18.1)
- Lower relationship satisfaction (34.6 vs 41.6)
- Higher relationship dissatisfaction (20.2 vs 12.9)
- Higher likelihood of poor mental health (37% vs 5%)
- Higher likelihood of feeling distressed in challenging relationships (38% vs 22%)
- Higher likelihood of feeling unsafe disagreeing with closest relationship (19% vs 8%)
- Higher likelihood of feeling distressed due to relationship pressures (42% vs 19%)

While we cannot say definitively that loneliness is the cause, there is a clear relationship between the experience of loneliness and other key relationship and life outcomes. This also indicates that focusing on improving any of these key areas, such as social connection, relationship support, etc. could assist in improving a range of other experiences.

Love and safety

In addition to loneliness, the Relationship Indicators survey measured the concepts of love and safety to explore how loneliness and other relational issues interacted with and were intensified by these other measures.

Key points:

1. 92% of Australians say they feel loved.

2. The feeling of being loved certainly appears to have a positive impact on subjective wellbeing measures. People who said they were loved were much more likely to agree or strongly agree across the subjective wellbeing measures.

3. 12% of Australians indicated they felt unsafe disagreeing with their most important person. Generally, people whose most important relationship was not a partner were more likely to feel unsafe disagreeing with their most important person.

4. Key concerns in disagreeing with their most important person were a worry that it would make a fight worse (65%) or worry that concerns would be dismissed or invalidated (63%).

Impact on wellbeing

92% of Australians say they feel loved. Those aged above 55 years old were slightly more likely to indicate they felt loved. People with disabilities, long-term mental or physical health conditions and carers were all less likely to say they felt loved.

The feeling of being loved certainly appears to have a positive impact on subjective wellbeing measures. People who said they were loved were much more likely to agree or strongly agree across the subjective wellbeing measures.

Unfortunately, among longitudinal respondents, the proportion of people saying they felt loved decreased 2 percentage points from 2022 and 2024.

In 2024, 6% of people indicated that they were currently in or had previously been in a relationship with multiple partners at once, otherwise known as polyamorous relationships, consensual non-monogamy, or ethical non-monogamy. Non-monogamous people reported significantly higher relationship dissatisfaction (18.5) and emotional loneliness (40%) as compared to monogamous people (15.3 and 21% respectively).

Feeling unsafe in important relationships

The Relationship Indicators survey did not attempt to specifically assess the prevalence of family violence, or explore risk and prevention factors. The survey continues to explore the concept of safety and control across a variety of measures. Controlling behaviours and feeling unsafe to not always equate to violence; however, they can be indicative of risk factors associated with family and domestic violence.

12% of Australians indicated they felt unsafe disagreeing with their most important person. This included relationships outside of partner relationships, particularly when family is considered the most important relationship. Generally, people whose most important relationship was not a partner were more likely to feel unsafe disagreeing with their most important person.

Among longitudinal respondents, the prevalence of people who felt unsafe disagreeing with their most important person increased 3 percentage points from 2022 to 2024 (8% to 11%).

Potentially more vulnerable people, including people with long-term mental health conditions and disabilities were more likely to feel unsafe having disagreements.

Figure 26 People feeling unsafe disagreeing with their most important relationship by age group
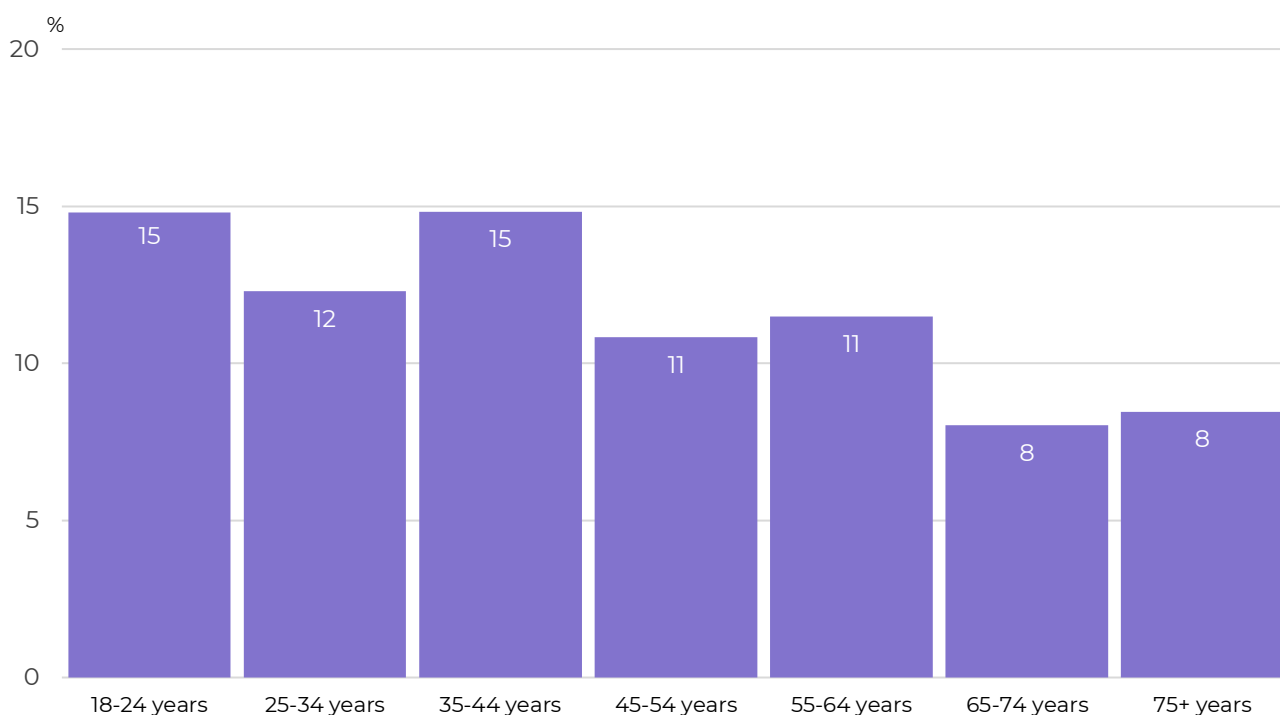
Base: Identified their most meaningful relationship, 18-24 years (n=127), 25-34 years (n=348), 35-44 years (n=496), 45-54 years (n=471), 55-64 years (n=552), 65-74 years (n=612), 75 or more years (n=388).

Question: B11. On a scale of one to seven, where one is 'not at all' and seven is 'to a great extent', to what extent do you feel safe disagreeing with them? Showing the proportion of those who selected 1 – Not at all safe, 2, or 3 on a 7 point scale.

What makes people feel unsafe?

After asking whether people felt unsafe in their closest relationship, respondents were then asked to select their reasons for feeling unsafe from the following five statements:

- Fear for my wellbeing / worried it could become verbally abusive or aggressive
  (only displayed to those who selected 1 – Not at all safe)

- Worried it will lead to a withdrawal of affection or may end the relationship

- I don't feel confident expressing myself effectively

- Worried my concerns will be dismissed or invalidated

- Worried it will make the fight worse

Key concerns in disagreeing with their most important person were a worry that it would make a fight worse (65%) or worry that concerns would be dismissed on invalidated (63%).

Among those who felt not at all safe in their closest relationship, fear for wellbeing / worried it could become verbally abusive or aggressive also emerged as a key concern (63%).

People who felt unsafe disagreeing with their most important relationship were also more likely to experience higher levels of emotional and social loneliness.

Figure 27 Reasons why people feel unsafe when disagreeing

Reason	%
Worried it will make the fight worse	65
Worried my concerns will be dismissed or invalidated	63
I don't feel confident expressing myself effectively	48
Worried it will lead to a withdrawal of affection or may end the relationship	41
Fear for my wellbeing / worried it could become verbally abusive or aggressive	11
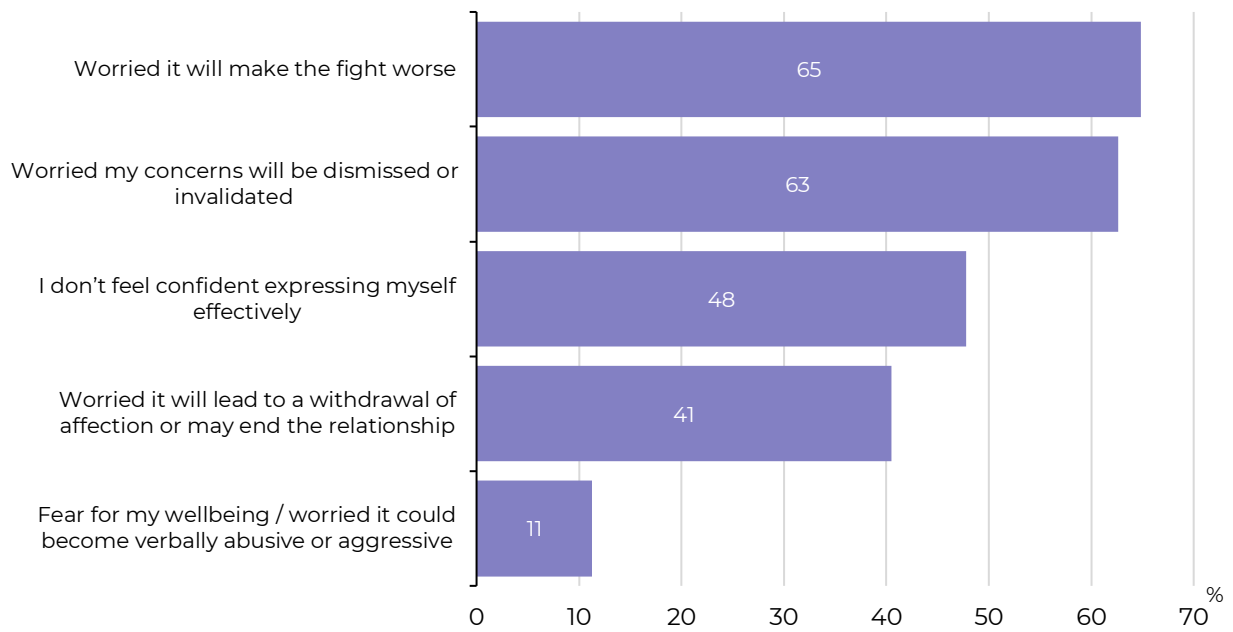
Base: Feels unsafe disagreeing with most meaningful relationship, n=357. Presented statement 'Fear for my wellbeing / worried it could become verbally abusive or aggressive', n=74.

Question: B11a. What do you fear when you have a disagreement?

Grief and loss

The Relationship Indicators survey included a series of measures around Australians' experiences of break-up, separation, and divorce. This includes exploration of ongoing impacts, outcomes and support systems available.

Key points:

1. 38% of Australians reported experiencing a break-up, 11% experienced a separation, and 17% experienced a divorce.

2. Among people who experienced a relationship breakdown, 36% indicated the impacts still affected them today.

3. Positively, 80% of people who went through a break-up, separation or divorce received valuable support from external sources.

4. When asked what affected the ability to access valuable support, key reasons were a lack of motivation / desire to access (24%), expense of support services (16%), isolation (15%), and a lack of understanding from support persons (13%).

5. Generally, people experienced both positive and negative impacts following a relationship breakdown.

6. When the impacts of relationship breakdown were still felt, 65% of people said they were taking time to heal to manage the impacts. Other key strategies included talking with friends / family (61%), accepting the situation / letting go (58%), and focusing on distractions (53%).

Who has experienced grief and loss

38% of Australians reported experiencing a break-up, 11% experienced a separation, and 17% experienced a divorce. Among longitudinal respondents, the incidence of all of these events increased from 2022 to 2024 (likely due to this group of respondents having new experiences over the past two years, as opposed to representing an increase in the rate of relationship breakdowns).

Among people who experienced a relationship breakdown, 36% indicated the impacts still affected them today. This was more likely among people who experienced a separation, with 54% indicating they were still affected by the impacts.

When asked about feelings towards their former partner over the past six months, 25% of people who experienced a break-up, separation or divorce stated they often avoided or kept away from their former partner. Frequent incidence of hostile or hateful feelings, or angry disagreements were less common experiences (7% and 5% respectively).

Figure 28 Relationship breakdown over time (longitudinal)
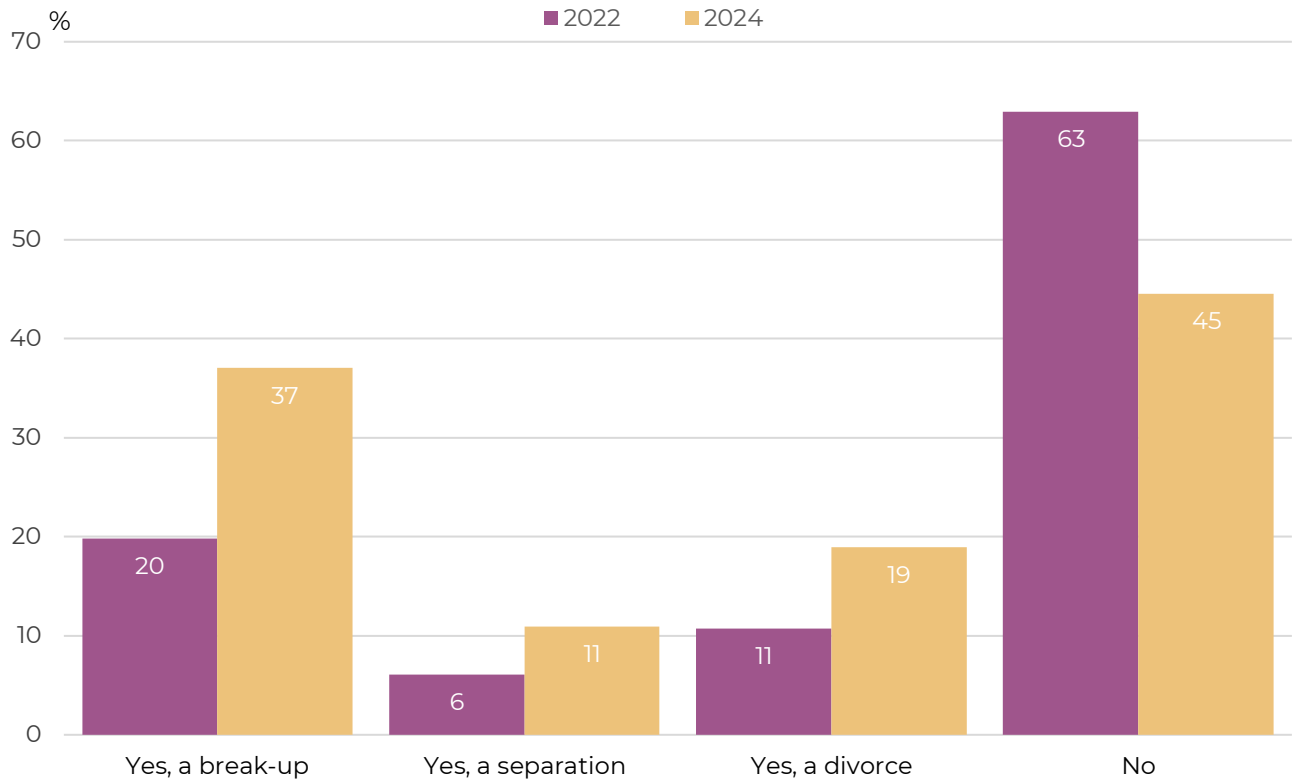
Base: Longitudinal respondents, n=2219.

Question: C4. Have you experienced a break-up, separation or divorce?

Note: "Yes, a bereavement" not included in analysis as it was not asked in 2024.

People who often or sometimes avoided or kept away from their previous partner reported lower subjective wellbeing (15.2), relationship satisfaction (34.4), and higher relationship dissatisfaction (21.5) as compared to those who responded not often or never (16.3, 39.1, 15.1 respectively).

People who often or sometimes felt hostile or hateful towards their previous partner reported lower subjective wellbeing (14.6), relationship satisfaction (33.2), and higher relationship dissatisfaction (22.3) compared to people who responded not often or never (16.6, 39.6, 14.6 respectively).

Finally, those who often or sometimes had angry disagreements with their previous partner reported lower subjective wellbeing (15.0), relationship satisfaction (34.4), and higher relationship dissatisfaction (21.5) compared to those who responded not often or never (16.9, 39.1, 15.1 respectively).

Figure 29 Actions towards former partner

Legend: Often, Sometimes, Not often / never

Action	Often	Sometimes	Not often / never
Avoided or kept away from them	25	16	58
Felt hostile or hateful towards them	7	17	74
Had angry disagreements with them	5	17	77
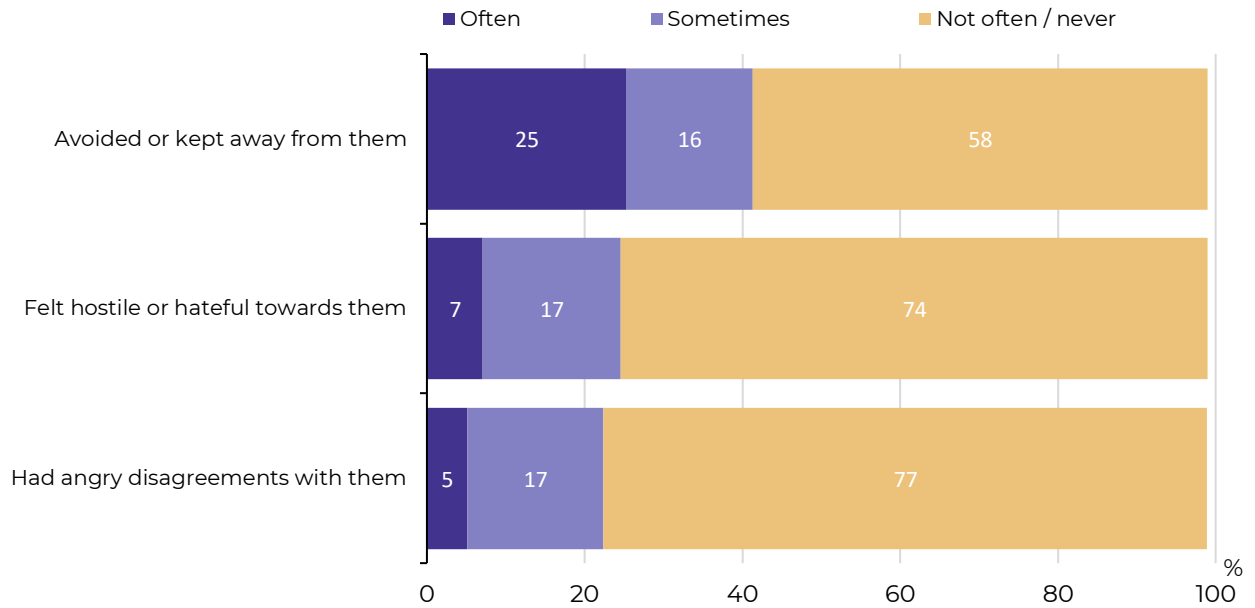
Base: Experienced relationship breakdown;, n=1674.

Question: C6a. With regard to your former partner, over the past 6 months, how often have you...

Figure 30 Experiences with lasting impact following relationship breakdowns

Category	%
Breakup	33
Divorce	43
Separation	54
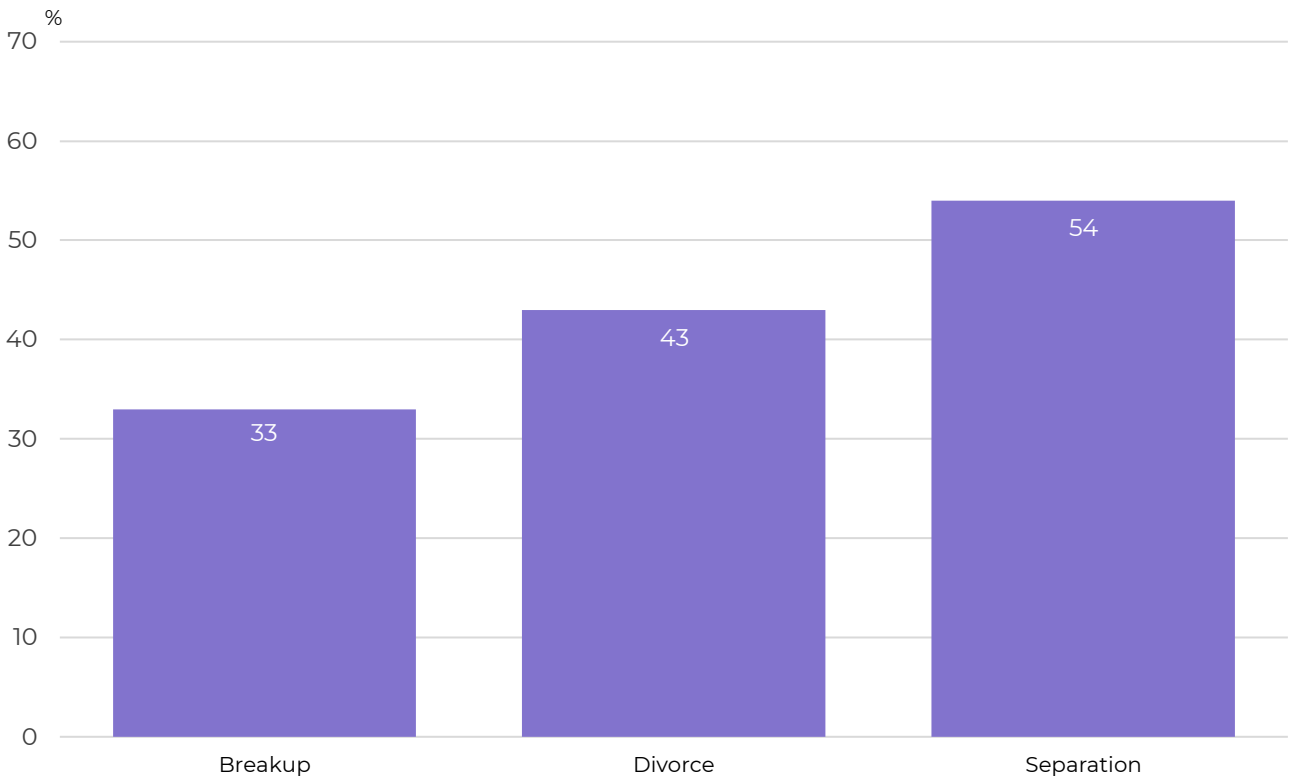
Base: Still experiencing impacts of relationship breakdown, n=609.

Question: C4. Have you experienced a break-up, separation or divorce? / C6b. Do the impacts of this break-up, separation or divorce still impact you today?

Positively, 80% of people who went through a break-up, separation or divorce received valuable support from external sources.

Primarily this support came from friends (66%) or family (53%), and one in five people reached out for professional support (e.g. from counsellors etc.: 19%).

Among those who received valuable support, 38% indicated the impacts of the break-up, separation, divorce still impacted them today. This likely indicates that people are more likely to access support when the effects of break-up, separation, divorce are ongoing.

Figure 31 Sources of support following relationship breakdown (%)
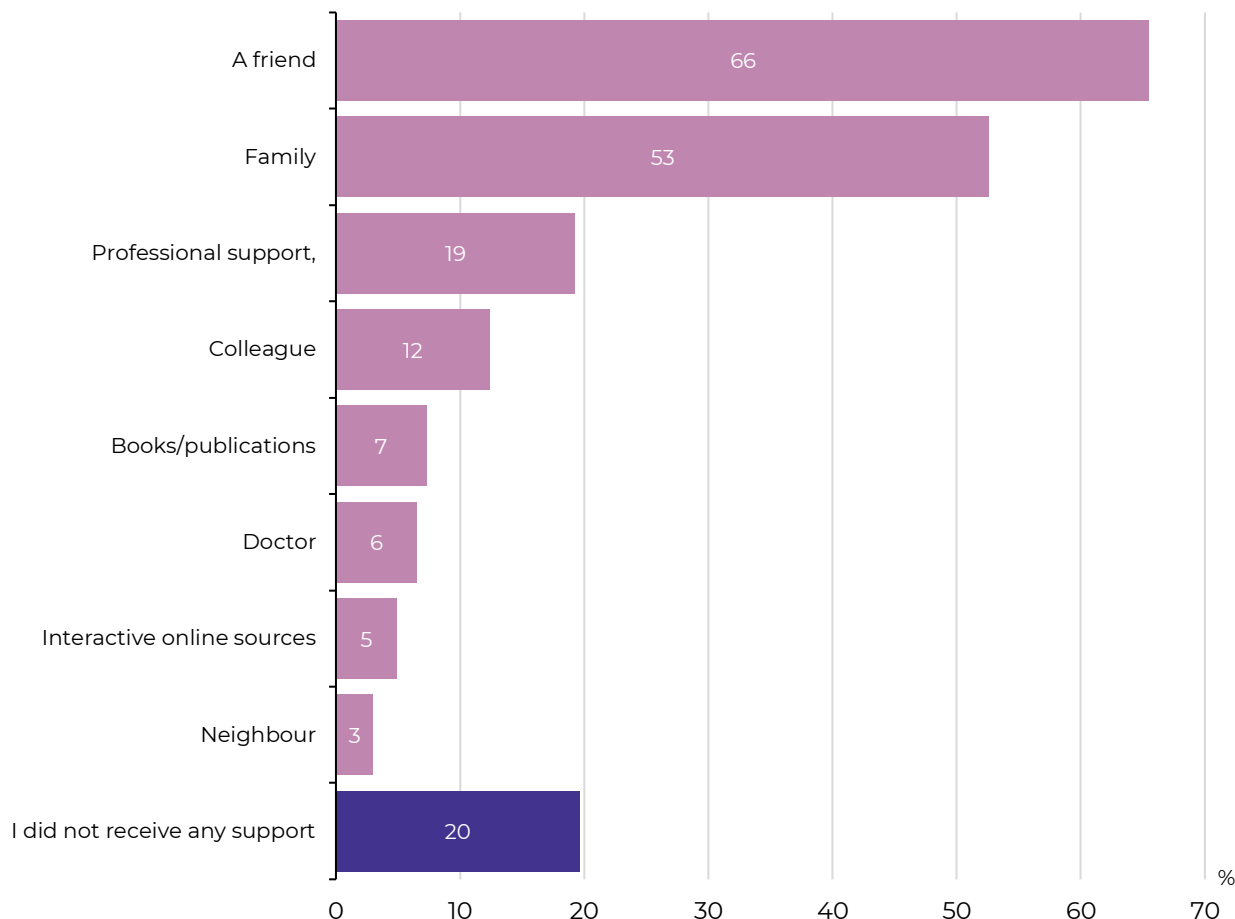
Base: Experienced relationship breakdown, n=1674.
Question: C5. Following this experience, did you receive any valuable support from any of the following sources?
Note: Responses with incidence of 2% or less not displayed - Priest/Imam/Rabbi/other religious leader (2%), Other (1%), Community leader (<1%).

When asked what affected the ability to access valuable support, key reasons were a lack of motivation / desire to access (24%), expense of support services (16%), isolation (15%), and a lack of understanding from support persons (13%).

This places a great emphasis on ensuring that support services are available and accessible through a variety of means. The presence of isolation as a barrier to support is a concern given the growing trend of loneliness, as well as social and emotional loneliness among Australians.

Figure 32 Barriers to accessing support in relationship breakdown

Barrier	%
Lack of motivation/desire	24
Expense of service	16
Isolation	15
Lack of understanding from chosen support person/s	13
Location of service	4
I managed on my own	3
I received adequate support from others	52
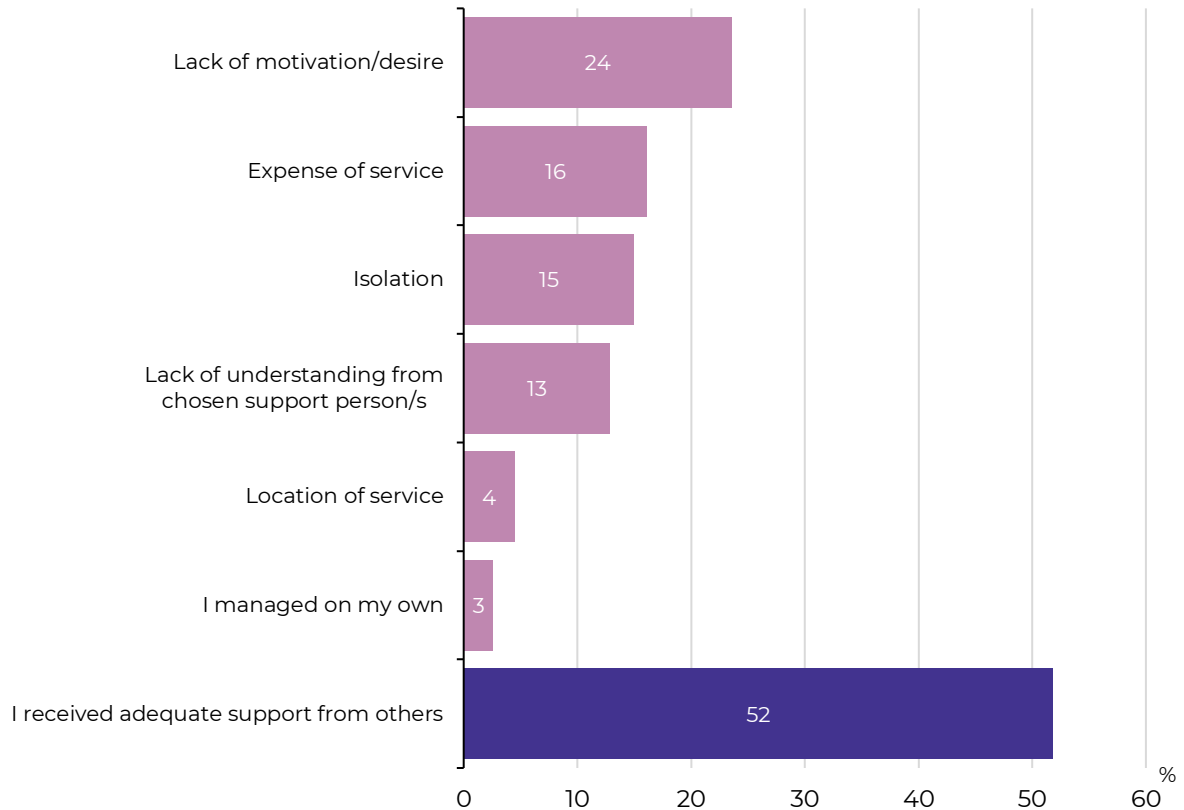
Base: Experienced relationship breakdown, n=1674.

Question: C6_New. Which, if any, of the following affected your ability to access valuable support?

Note: Responses with incidence of 3% or less not displayed.

Negative impacts following relationship breakdown

Among those who still experience impacts of their relationship breakdown, 52% indicated they were experiencing a reduced trust in others. Other key impacts include feelings of sadness or loneliness (45%), lowered confidence / self-esteem (45%), negative impacts on mental health (43%), and a reduced interest in future relationships (41%).

People who experience ongoing impacts of relationship breakdown are more likely to be emotionally lonely, and notably more likely to be socially lonely. Given the key negative impacts felt following relationship breakdowns, it is likely these increased feelings of loneliness pose an additional challenge for Australians to move past. This places additional importance on external support following these events, particularly given the trend of increasingly loneliness among Australians.

Figure 33 Ongoing effects of relationship breakdown

Effect	%
Reduced trust in others	52
Feelings of sadness or loneliness	45
My confidence / self-esteem is lower	45
Negative impacts on mental health	43
Reduced interest in future relationships	41
Ongoing sadness / regret around the relationship ending	30
Financial impacts	28
Difficulty in connecting with others	28
Negative impacts on children / other family members	26
Ongoing negative or problematic behaviour from the previous partner	21
Difficulty in communicating with others	21
Challenges with shared parenting arrangements	13
Reliance on alcohol, drugs etc.	9
I have not had any ongoing challenges	2

Base: Still impacted by relationship breakdown, n=609.
Question: C7_New. What are the ongoing effects or challenges you have experienced as a result of the break-up, separation, or divorce?
Note: Responses of 3% incidence or less not shown (Feeling angry or resentful, Feelings of guilt or shame,, Other effects or challenges)

Coping strategies following relationship breakdown

When the impacts of relationship breakdown were still felt, 65% of people said they were taking time to heal to manage the impacts. Other key strategies included talking with friends / family (61%), accepting the situation / letting go (58%), and focusing on distractions (53%).

The use of family and friends as a coping strategy aligns with the high proportion of people indicating they received valuable support from friends or family.

Figure 34 Strategies for managing the impacts of relationship breakdown
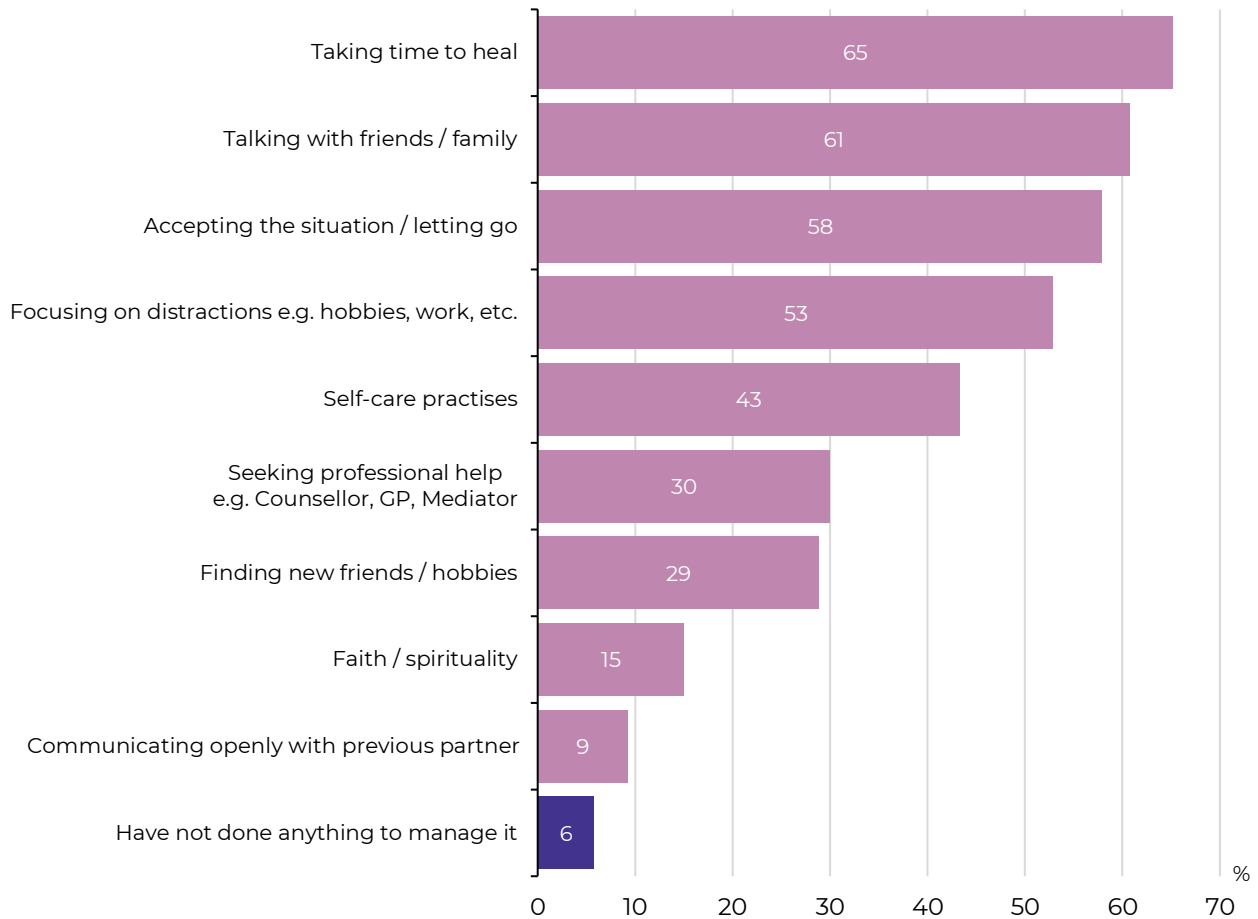
Strategy	%
Taking time to heal	65
Talking with friends / family	61
Accepting the situation / letting go	58
Focusing on distractions e.g. hobbies, work, etc.	53
Self-care practises	43
Seeking professional help e.g. Counsellor, GP, Mediator	30
Finding new friends / hobbies	29
Faith / spirituality	15
Communicating openly with previous partner	9
Have not done anything to manage it	6

Base: Still impacted by relationship breakdown, n=609.
Question: C8_New. What have you done to manage the impact/s of the break-up, separation, or divorce? Please select all that apply.

Positive impacts following relationship breakdown

The survey also asked about positive impacts following the relationship breakdown. While 16% of people who experienced relationship breakdown said nothing good came of it, 52% indicated they had an increased sense of independence / freedom, and 45% were able to pursue new experiences.

Most people experience both positive and negative impacts following relationship breakdown, with only 2% of people indicating they had not had any ongoing challenges, compared to the 16% who said nothing good followed the relationship breakdown. This certainly encourages the idea that these experiences are often multifaceted, and support should not ignore the challenges in favour of the positives.

Figure 35 Positive outcomes as a result of relationship breakdown

	%
I have a sense of increased independence / freedom	52
I was able to pursue new experiences	45
My mental health improved	33
Stronger relationships with others	30
My finances improved	27
My confidence / self-esteem improved	26
A friendship developed with my previous partner	7
Other positive things	4
Nothing good came from it	16
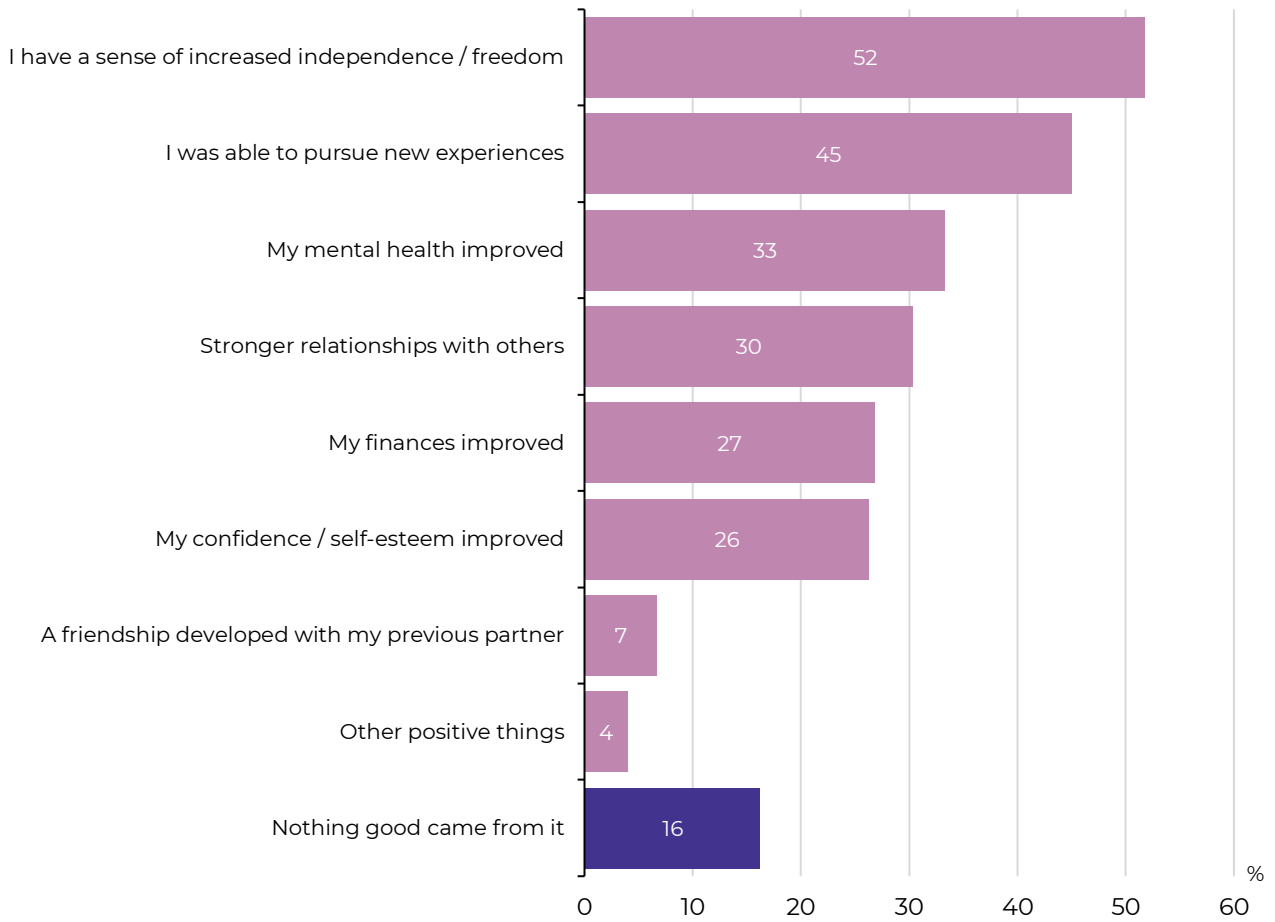
Base: Still impacted by relationship breakdown, n=609.

Question: C9_New. Did anything good come from the break-up, separation, or divorce? Please select all that apply.

Note: Responses with less than 2% incidence not shown (A sense of safety, I developed a new relationship)

Accessing support

Support seeking behaviour continues to be an important element of this research, particularly given ongoing trends including decreasing relationship satisfaction measures, increasing rates of loneliness, and additional relationship pressures being faced. All of these trends point to a definite and increasing need for external support systems.

Key points:

1. When people face relationship difficulties, almost half manage on their own as opposed to seeking external support.

2. Friends and family are most commonly reached out to for support during relationship pressures (37% and 33% respectively).

3. People managing relationship pressures on their own were notably more likely to be socially lonely, compared to those who reached out to other support systems.

4. When asked which groups play an important role in people's lives, key groups included friendship groups (59%) and family groups (55%). Colleagues also played an important role in people's lives (38%).

5. The majority of people selected they would turn to their most important relationship across a range of situations, particularly when they wanted to enjoy a pleasant social occasion (82%), or if they needed help around the house because they were sick (80%).

Help-seeking behaviour

When people face relationship difficulties, almost half manage on their own as opposed to seeking external support. As seen when relationship breakdowns happen, friends and family are most commonly reached out to for support during relationship pressures (37% and 33% respectively). Meanwhile, only 8% of people used professional support services including counsellors.

Among longitudinal respondents, the proportion of people managing on their own increased slightly, which may be concerning given trends of increased feelings of loneliness and relationship pressures experienced among the same group.

People were more likely to access professional support for more distressing relationship pressures, including mental health, fear, and drug use.

Meanwhile, though pressures such as unfulfilled expectations, different values / beliefs and money problems were all commonly felt in relationships, the proportion of people managing on their own with these pressures was significantly higher.

Additionally, there was not a notable impact on emotional loneliness, however the proportion of people managing relationship pressures on their own were notably more likely to be socially lonely, compared to those who reached out to other support systems.

'Using a search engine such as Google' (5%) was a newly introduced option in 2024, intended to gauge whether people that manage on their own are accessing information or self-help materials online to assist in managing their relationship difficulties. While some people who self-managed also accessed resources through search engines, the overall increase of self-management indicated that there are still many people who seek no support with relationship difficulties.

Figure 36 Sources of support during relationship difficulties (%)
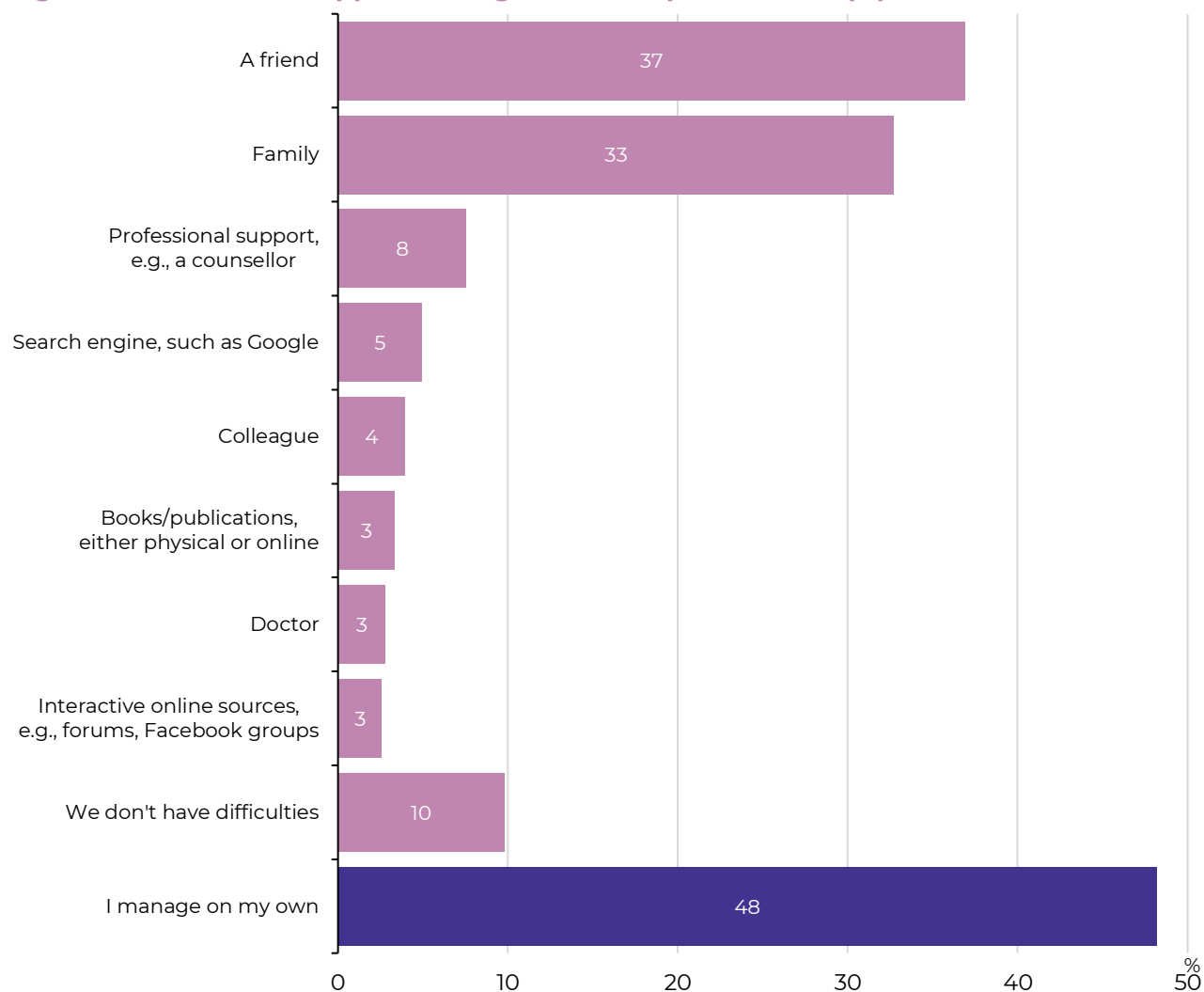
Base: Identified their most meaningful relationship, n=2995..

Question: B12. When things are difficult in this relationship, where do you go for support?

Note: Responses with incidence of 2% or less not displayed - Priest/Imam/Rabbi/other religious leader (2%), Other (2%), Neighbour (1%), Community leader (<1%).

The importance of group based connections

When asked which groups play an important role in people's lives, key groups included friendship groups (59%) and family groups (55%). Colleagues also played an important role in people's lives (38%).

Among longitudinal respondents, the proportion of people saying groups did not play an important role in their lives increased between 2022 and 2024 (12% to 15%).

The average number of important groups selected also decreased very slightly between 2022 and 2024 among longitudinal respondents.

People who disagreed or strongly disagreed with the subjective wellbeing measures were generally more likely to indicate that groups did not play an important role in their lives, particularly those who disagreed with the statements: the conditions of my life are excellent, and so far I have gotten the most important things I want in life.

Additionally, those who indicated that groups did not play an important role in their lives were much more likely to be socially or emotionally lonely.

All of these trends further support the need for external support systems, given the role they play in our social and overall wellbeing.

Figure 37 Groups that play an important role in people's lives

Group	%
Friendship group	59
Family group	55
Colleagues	38
Community group	16
Sporting group	13
Online group	11
Religious group	9
Neighbourhood group	9
Environment/gardening group	3
Union	1
Political party/organisation	1
Groups do not play an important role in my life	14
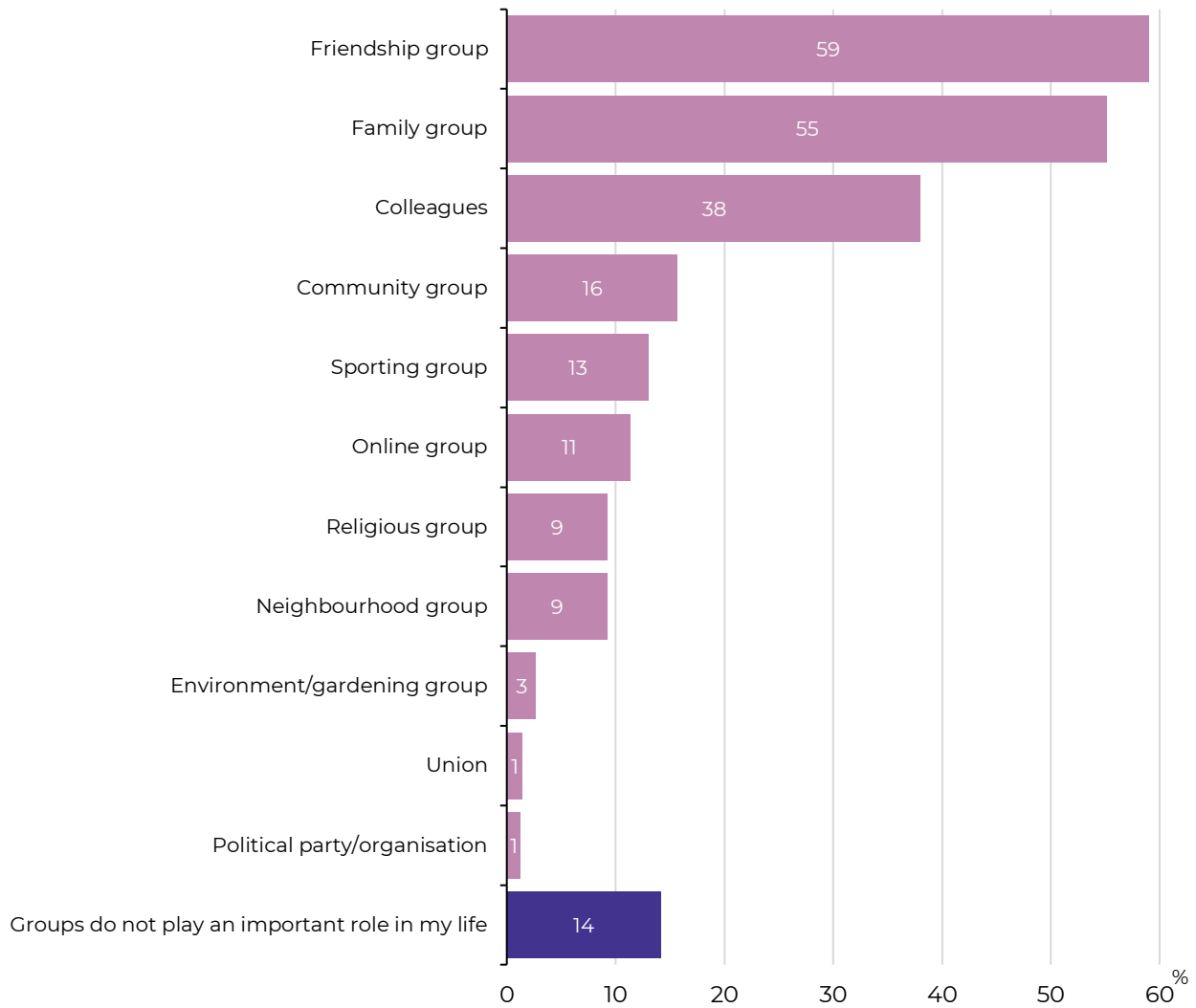
Base: All respondents, n=3,004.
Question: E1. From the following list, please select which, if any, of the following groups play an important role in your life…
Note: Responses with incidence of 1% or less not displayed.

Where do Australians seek social support?

Respondents were asked if they would turn to their most important person, or somebody else across a range of situations where help might be needed.

Across all situations, the majority of people selected they would turn to their most important relationship, particularly when they wanted to enjoy a pleasant social occasion (82%), or if they needed help around the house because they were sick (80%).

A quarter of people would turn to somebody else if they were feeling down or depressed and wanted someone to talk to.

A household or garden job that they couldn't do themselves is the most common situation where people would turn to somebody else instead of their most important person, though this is still only in a third of cases.

People who had a male friend or partner as their closest relationship were more likely to approach this person for support if they needed help with a household or garden job that they couldn't do themselves (88%) compared to those with a female closest friend or partner (66%). However, if 'they felt a bit down or depressed and wanted to talk about it' or they wanted to enjoy a pleasant social occasion, people were more likely to select their female closest friends or partners (85%, 92%) compared to those with male closest friends or partners (80%, 88%). This is consistent with the findings of the Relationship Indicators

Survey 2022, which found that people tended towards women more often than men for emotional support.

Figure 38 Who people turn to first

Legend: ■ Closest relationship ■ Somebody else

- To enjoy a pleasant social occasion with: 82 / 17
- If you needed help around your home because you were sick: 80 / 20
- If you felt a bit down or depressed and wanted to talk about it: 75 / 24
- If you needed help with a household or garden job that you couldn't do yourself: 68 / 32
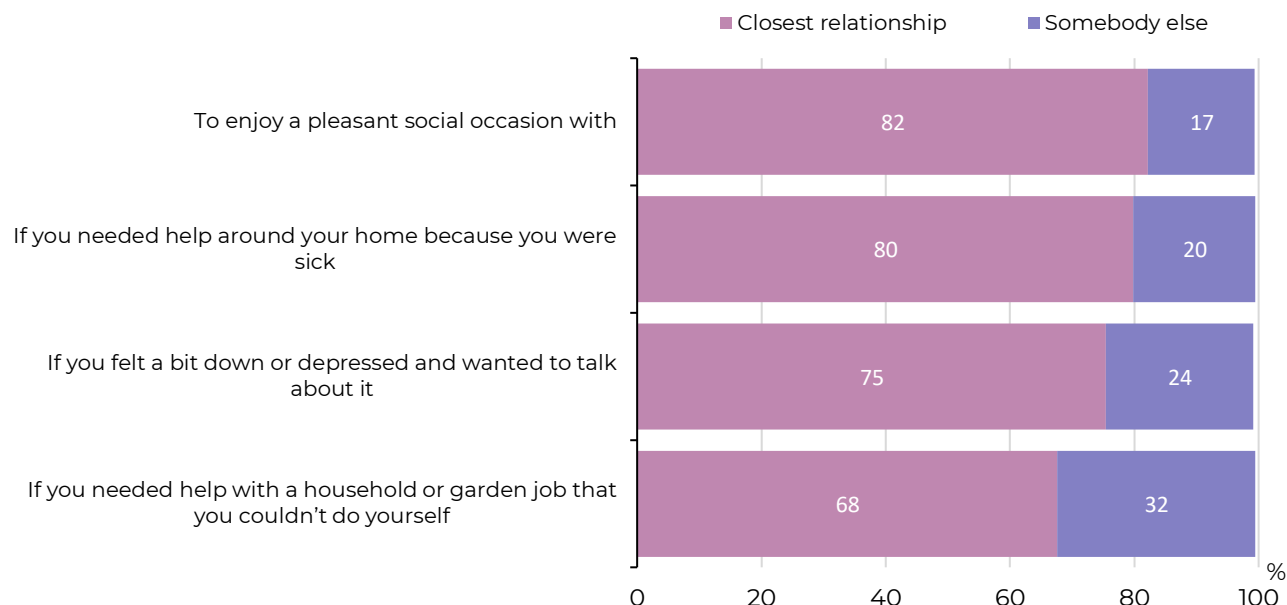
Base: All respondents, n=3004.
Question: E7. Who would you turn to first for the following situations?

When do Australians seek social support?

When people manage difficulties and relationship pressures on their own, they were asked what situation would prompt them to seek external support.

Almost a third indicated they would never seek external support for relationship difficulties (29%). Key situations that would prompt seeking external support included if they contemplated ending the relationship (35%), if they stopped being able to communicate easily about the problem (31%), if they had repeated unresolved conflicts (29%), and if the other person began disconnecting from the relationship (25%).

Those who would never seek out social support reported lower subjective wellbeing (15.3), lower relationship satisfaction (33.7), higher relationship dissatisfaction (18.8), were more likely to report poor mental health (38%), more likely to be distressed due to relationship pressures (35%), and less likely to report that they felt loved (27%). These outcomes highlight the importance of a healthy social network to seek support from, and the importance of increasing engagement with support measures in Australia.

An important caveat is that those who reported feeling unsafe disagreeing with their closest relationship (38%) were more likely to report that they would never seek external support than those who felt safe disagreeing (26%). This hints towards the environmental impacts of hostile and unsafe relationships on people's willingness to seek help.

Figure 39 Reasons people would seek social support when self-managing relationship difficulties

Reason	%
If we contemplated ending the relationship	35
If we stopped being able to communicate easily about the problem	31
If we had repeated unresolved conflicts	29
If the other person began emotionally withdrawing, losing intimacy, and disconnecting from the relationship	25
When someone else told me to seek support	14
Never	29
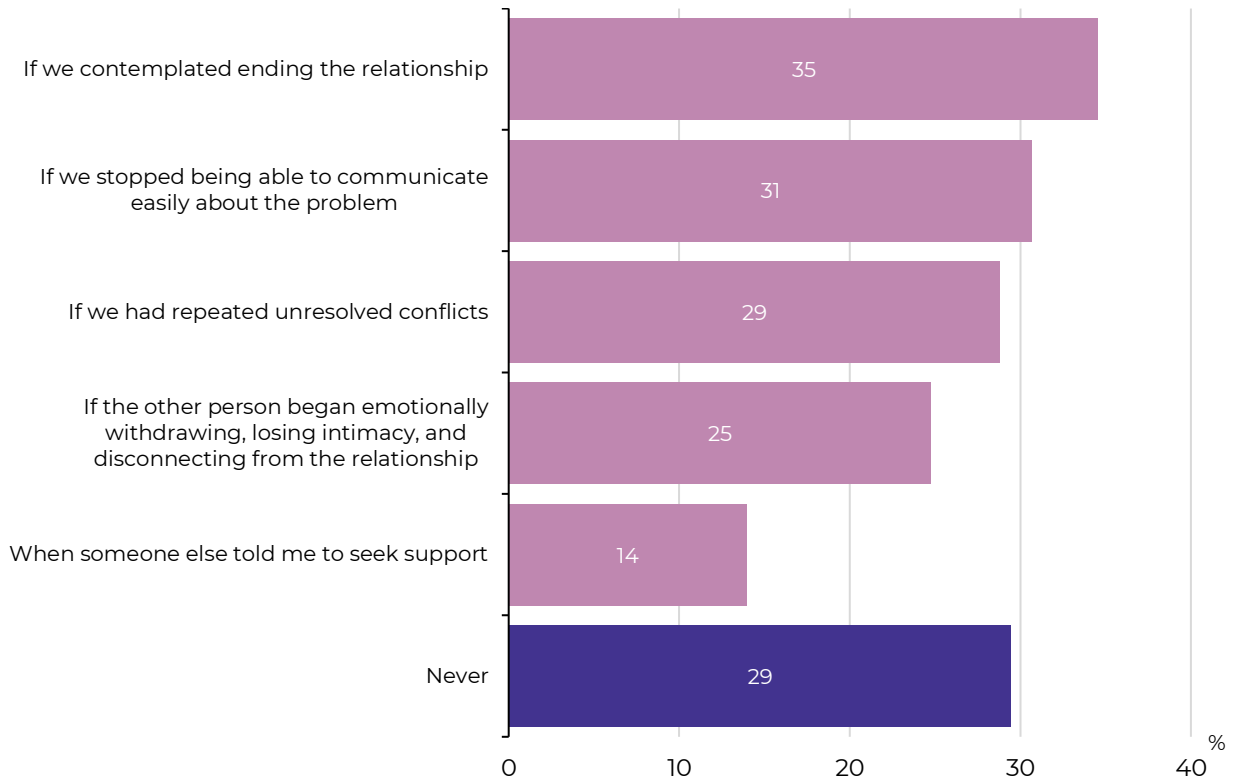
Base: Manages relationship difficulties on their own, n=1463.

Question: B12a. If you manage your relationship difficulties on your own, when would you seek external support?

Recommendations

Based on the findings from this research, Relationships Australia makes the following recommendations:

1. Continue to fund services and other supports which promote and enable satisfying and respectful relationships

Government, researchers and service providers should seek to better understand the underlying causes of the decrease in positive experiences and increase in negative relationship dynamics observed since the 2022 survey.

Both researchers and service providers should continue to monitor changes to relationship satisfaction to understand trends across communities and ensure services are available to meet the demand.

2. Include funding for relationship services as part of the national response to issues such as domestic and family violence, loneliness, mental health and suicidality

Relationship services are often understood as adjacent or complementary to biomedical approaches to loneliness, mental ill-health and suicidality, and often sit apart from what are considered to be "specialist services" for domestic and family violence. However, our findings demonstrate that these issues are related to relationship satisfaction. Relationship services should be understood and funded as key responses to these issues.

3. Recognise and acknowledge the ongoing impact that external pressures are placing on relationships and do more to relieve these pressures

79% of Australians faced relationship pressures in the last six months. While relationship pressures are a regular part of relationships, findings show that they are associated with reduced relationship satisfaction, lower levels of subjective wellbeing and higher levels of loneliness.

The full impact of these external pressures, including cost of living pressures, should be included in policy and evaluation of service provision so as to ensure that families are supported to navigate through them, and the negative consequences for relationships, mental health and community cohesion are reduced.

4. Recognise that some groups are disproportionately affected by relationship pressures, reducing wellbeing, relationship satisfaction and ultimately contributing to relationship breakdown

People with long-term mental and physical ill-health, people with disability, and their carers were shown to be disproportionately affected by relationship pressures. We must do more to acknowledge the impact on relationships and wellbeing for these groups, understand why this is the case and provide opportunities for these groups to determine what supports would effectively support them through these challenges.

5. Address growing rates of loneliness, especially social loneliness

Among longitudinal respondents, the proportion of those experiencing social or emotional loneliness increased from 2022 and 2024, supporting increases seen in overall loneliness. These changes, in addition to greater pressures faced, and lower incidence of positive relationship traits, point to a shift in social health among Australians, and a need to focus on fostering positive connections.

More must be done to address the growing rates of loneliness in Australia. Loneliness is a complex issue that requires a multi-faceted solution. Relationships Australia recommends that a crucial first step is to invest funding in primary responses which address loneliness at the population-level.

6. Fund more research to explore the causes of relationship distress, particularly for LGBTIQ+ and gender fluid communities, and identify relevant prevention techniques

Throughout this study, we found that respondents who identify as members of the LGBTIQ+ communities faced significant challenges and pressures, leading to relationship distress. More must be done to understand how this affects wellbeing and safety, and what can be done to better support these communities.

7. Fund more research to explore the role age plays on relationships

Our findings tell a unique story about ageing and relationships. Throughout this study, we found that older people had greater relationship satisfaction and wellbeing, reduced loneliness and less relationship pressures. Yet older Australians were also more likely to say they manage problems in their relationships alone. There is an opportunity to better understand the unique needs of this growing cohort to ensure services are available to meet them as and when they are needed.

8. Support boys and men to build respectful relationships and create stronger connections with those around them

Mirroring the findings in our 2022 study, this year's study revealed that men's experiences of relationships are starkly different to that of women. Relationships Australia believes there must be more done to understand gendered differences. This includes conducting research to explore how these differences relate to phenomena such as masculinity and family violence and developing and providing awareness and education campaigns, combined with tailored supports to enable men to create more fulfilling connections.

9. Continue to fund relationship services and other supports to enable people to navigate relationship challenges in productive, respectful and safe ways

All relationships face challenges; people need support to navigate disagreements and relationship breakdown safely to ensure that the effects of this experience do not harm future relationships, or contribute to loneliness or mental ill-health.

A greater understanding of why people choose to manage relationship challenges on their own is required, so that relevant education and support can be tailored for those who choose to do so, empowering them to meet those challenges and minimise the negative impacts.

Closing comments

This latest wave of research continues to support that relationships are inherently complex and multifaceted. The relationships we hold are massively influential to our wellbeing and life satisfaction, but equally can be influenced by external and internal factors. There is no single correct solution for all relationships, but Australians should feel empowered to seek support and work through challenges, to ensure their relationships are satisfying and fulfilling throughout their lifetime.

Suggested Citation Relationships Australia (2024). Relationship Indicators 2024. 'Full Report'. (Relationship Indicators | Relationships Australia)

Accreditation

All aspects of this research was undertaken in accordance with ISO 20252:2019 Market, Opinion and Social Research Standard, The Research Society (formerly AMSRS) Code of Professional Behaviour, the Australian Privacy Principles and the Privacy (Market and Social Research) Code 2021.

The Social Research Centre is an accredited Company Partner of The Research Society with all senior staff as full members and several senior staff QPMR accredited. The Social Research Centre is also a member of the Australian Data and Insights Association (ADIA formerly known as AMSRO) and bound by the Market and Social Research Privacy Principles/Code.

Technical report

List of abbreviations and terms

Abbreviation / term	Description / definition
SRC	The Social Research Centre
The Survey	Relationship Indicators Survey 2024
RIS	Relationship Indicators Survey
A-BS	Address-based sampling
CATI	Computer-assisted telephone interviewing
CAWI	Computer-assisted web interviewing (i.e. online)
COMR	Completion Rate
CUMRR	Cumulative Response Rate
G-NAF	Geo-coded National Address File
IVR	Interactive Voice Response
PROR	Profile Rate
RDD	Random digit dialling
RECR	Recruitment Rate
RETR	Retention Rate
SMS	Short Messaging Service (i.e. text message)

Introduction

Project background

Relationships Australia commissioned the Social Research Centre to conduct the Relationship Indicators Survey 2024. The aim of the survey was to analyse the types and nature of important relationships that people experience in Australia and the impacts of social connectedness on wellbeing outcomes.

This wave of the survey was intended to follow on from the research conducted by Relationships Australia and the Social Research Centre in 2022.

The survey was conducted on the 104th wave of Life in Australia™, the Social Research Centre's probability-based online panel.

Overview

Key project statistics for the survey are summarised in Table 1.

Table 1   Summary of key statistics

Field	Total	Online	Offline
Invited to complete survey	4,071	4,009	62
Total Interviews achieved	3,004	2,968	36
Average interview duration (mins)	15.0	14.8	29.9
Completion rate (%)	73.8	74.0	58.1
Main fieldwork start date	19-Aug-24	19-Aug-24	19-Aug-24
Main fieldwork finish date	1-Sep-24	1-Sep-24	1-Sep-24

Life in Australia™

In 2016, the Social Research Centre established Australia's first national probability-based online panel: Life in Australia™ (Kaczmirek et al., 2019). The panel is the most methodologically rigorous online panel in Australia and is one of only a small number worldwide.[3] Members of the panel are recruited via random digit dialling (RDD) or address-based sampling (A-BS) and agreed to provide their contact details to take part in surveys on a regular basis. What separates Life in Australia™ from other online panels is the use of sampling frames for which units have known probability of selection and the fact that people cannot enroll unless invited to participate.

Ethics and quality assurance

All aspects of this research was undertaken in accordance with ISO 20252:2019 Market, Opinion and Social Research Standard, The Research Society (formerly AMSRS) Code of Professional Behaviour, the Australian Privacy Principles and the *Privacy (Market and Social Research) Code 2021*.

The Social Research Centre is an accredited Company Partner of The Research Society with all senior staff as full members and several senior staff QPMR accredited. The Social Research Centre is also a member of the Australian Data and Insights Association (ADIA formerly known as AMSRO) and bound by the Market and Social Research Privacy Principles/Code.

Questionnaire design and testing

The questionnaire was developed by Relationships Australia and the Social Research Centre based on the RIS 2022 questionnaire, retaining the key question sets used to build indicators (Wellbeing, Loneliness and Relationship Satisfaction), and including revisions based on key learnings from the previous survey. The Social Research Centre then operationalised the questionnaire. Prior to fieldwork starting, standard operational testing procedures were applied to ensure that the script truly reflected the agreed final electronic version of the questionnaire. These included:

- programming the skips and sequencing instructions as per the final questionnaire

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[3] Others include the Pew Research Center American Trends Panel, NORC AmeriSpeak and GESIS Panel.

- rigorous checking of the questionnaire in 'practice mode' by the Social Research Centre project coordinator and the project quality supervisor, including checks of the on-screen presentation of questions and response frames on a range of devices
- randomly allocating dummy data to each field in the questionnaire and examining the resultant frequency counts to check the structural integrity of the script.

No formal pilot testing was undertaken. However, a soft launch was undertaken to confirm the integrity of the questionnaire. This involved initiating a small number of offline records on the first planned day of fieldwork. The interviewing team was de-briefed and top-line data reviewed.

The final questionnaire is appended at Appendix 1.

Methodology

Sample design and size

Target population

The in-scope population for the survey was adult residents in Australia. This was operationalised as all active Life in Australia™ members. Focus was placed on recruiting respondents to wave 1 of the survey, initially conducted in 2022. New respondents were then recruited to the survey to achieve a final response rate of n=3,000.

Recruitment to Life in Australia™

Life in Australia™ panellists have been recruited using a variety of probability sampling frames and survey modes. These are summarised in Table 2.

Table 2   Summary of Life in Australia™ recruitment

Year	Sampling frame	Recruitment mode(s)	Panel members profiled (n)	Recruitment Rate[*] %	Profile Rate %
2016	DFRDD	CATI	3,322	20.0	77.7
2018	Mobile RDD	CATI	267	12.1	69.7
2019	A-BS	CAWI / CATI	1,810	10.8	100.0
2020	A-BS	Mail push-to-web / CATI	309	6.1	100.0
2020	Mobile RDD	IVR	158	1.6	100.0
2020	Mobile RDD	SMS push-to-web	145	3.1	100.0
2021	SMS	SMS push-to-web	510	3.4	100.0
2021	A-BS	CAWI / CATI	3,715	7.7	100.0
2023	SMS	SMS push-to-web	4,164	2.6	100.0

Year	Sampling frame	Recruitment mode(s)	Panel members profiled (n)	Recruitment Rate[*] %	Profile Rate %
2024	SMS	SMS push-to-web	3,267	1.8	100.0

Notes: A-BS = address-based sampling; CATI = computer-assisted telephone interviewing; CAWI = computer-assisted web interviewing; DFRDD = dual-frame (landline and mobile) RDD; IVR = interactive voice response; RDD = random digit dialling; SMS = short message service (i.e., text message).

* AAPOR RR3. See Callegaro and DiSogra (2008) for details on outcome rates for online panels; profile rates are of questionable relevance for non-CATI modes.

Dual-frame RDD (2016)

Initial recruitment in 2016 used a dual-frame random digit dialling sample design, with a 30:70 split between the landline RDD sample frame and mobile phone RDD sample frame. For the landline sample, an alternating next / last birthday method was used to randomly select respondents from households where two or more in-scope persons were present. For mobile sample, the phone answerer was the selected respondent. Only one member per household was invited to join the panel. RDD sample was supplied by SamplePages.[4] Mobile and landline coverage in Australia in 2017–18 was 98% (Phillips et al., 2019), including the 1% error rate from RDD vendor checks for number working status.

Mobile RDD (2018)

In 2018, the panel was refreshed using only mobile RDD sample. Only online participants that were under 55 years old were recruited, in order to balance the demographics (the age profile of panel members was older than that of the Australian population). The recruitment rate (RECR) for the replenishment was 12.1%. For both the recruitment in 2016 and panel refreshment in 2018, the RDD sample was provided by SamplePages. Mobile coverage in Australia in 2017–18 was 93% (Phillips et al., 2019), again with a 1% error rate from working number look-up as part of SamplePages' processes.

Address-based sampling (2019, 2020, 2021)

Between October-December 2019, the panel was expanded. This recruitment used address-based sampling (A-BS; Link et al., 2005) with push-to-web methodology (Dillman, 2017).[5] Only online participants were recruited in order to balance the demographics (the age profile of panel members was older and more educated than that of the Australian population). The sampling frame used was the Geo-coded National Address File (G-NAF), Australia's authoritative list of addresses, and is assumed to cover all Australian addresses.[6] An 'any adult' approach to selection was applied; i.e., one adult per household with no attempt to impose a selection routine.[7] The G-NAF is an open-source file that is built and maintained by Geoscape Australia (Australian Government, 2023). Later rounds of recruitment took place in 2020 (with

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[4] SamplePages selects numbers randomly from the Australian Communication and Media Authority's register of numbers, which shows all allocated (i.e., potentially in use) blocks of mobile numbers. For mobile RDD, SamplePages does not use a list-assisted approach (Brick et al., 1995); a pure RDD sample is drawn. A list-assisted approach is used for landline RDD. Before release to the Social Research Centre, sampled numbers undergo HLR/SS7 look-up to check for active status (a process sometimes called 'pulsing' or 'pinging'), with inactive numbers not being provided to the Social Research Centre. SamplePages reports a 1% false negative rate for these checks for active status.

[5] Addresses matched to telephone numbers received reminder calls; respondents who received a reminder call could join the panel via telephone, with the panel profile being collected via CATI.

[6] The homeless population in 2016 (Australian Bureau of Statistics, 2018b) living in improvised dwellings (N = 8,200), supported accommodation (N = 21,235) and boarding houses (N = 17,503) are assumed inaccessible via address-based sampling, amounted to 0.2% of the total Australian population of all ages (N = 23,401,891) (Australian Bureau of Statistics, 2023). The most recent official statistics on internet usage are for the 2016-17 financial year, when 86.1% of adults used the internet (Australian Bureau of Statistics, 2018a). Indicative of trends since then, internet usage was excluded from the 2021 Census of Population and Housing on the rationale that internet access via smartphones was effectively universal.

[7] In the interest of response maximisation, a decision was made to allow any responsible adult within the household to complete the survey rather than apply a within-household selection procedure. This decision was based on the knowledge that within-household selection methods have been found to add a layer of complexity that increases non-response (Battaglia et al., 2008). Thus, while a within-household selection method may be desired as a means of minimising coverage error, this is overshadowed by the potential to increase non-response error. The accuracy of within-household selection procedures applied to address-based sampling studies has also been questioned (Olson, Stange, & Smyth, 2014).

IVR and SMS push-to-web as described below) and 2021, the panel was expanded using the A-BS sampling frame and push-to-web and CATI methodology, as described above. Offline respondents were recruited in 2021 (a call-in number was provided). Coverage is estimated at 96.1% of addresses due to the Social Research Centre's exclusion of certain addresses that have a low probability of being residential.

Interactive voice response (2020)

Interactive voice response (IVR) push-to-web makes brief use of IVR (an automated call) to briefly describe the reason for the call; people who are interested are then sent a link to the profile survey via SMS. IVR coverage is estimated at 97%, based on 98% mobile coverage (Australian Communications and Media Authority, 2022a) and the 1% working number look-up error rate referred to above.[8]

SMS push-to-web (2021, 2023, 2024)

SMS push-to-web uses SMS as the mode of invitation, with respondents invited to click a link to complete the profile survey in CAWI mode. As described in footnote 6, above, no up-to-date official statistics on internet access are available, apart from those derived from Life in Australia™; the Australian Communications and Media Authority (2022b) estimates 99% internet coverage, using Life in Australia™ data; we assume that non-internet users overlapped with those without mobile phones.

In April 2021, the panel was refreshed. This recruitment used an RDD mobile sample frame with SMS invitation. Only online participants were recruited. SMS coverage is estimated at 95%, based on 96% mobile coverage (Australian Communications and Media Authority, 2022a) and the 1% working number look-up error rate referred to above.[9]

In February-March 2023 and February-March 2024, the panel was expanded using an RDD mobile sampling frame and SMS push-to-web, as described above. Coverage is as described above.

Over time some panellists have withdrawn from future participation in the panel, while others are retired due to non-response or poor-quality responses.

Sample selection

The sample was drawn from Life in Australia™ in two stages. The first was to select all active panellists that completed the Relationship Indicators survey in 2022. Along with a second, stratified random sample from the remaining panellists on strata defined by age (18–34, 35–44, 45–54, 55–64, 65+), gender, education (less than a bachelor's degree, bachelor's degree or above) and speaking a language other than English at home. To come as close as possible to population norms on the stratification variables, target numbers of completed surveys by stratum are set based on population proportions for the stratified sample. Because there may not be sufficient numbers of Life in Australia™ panellists within some strata given expected completion rates, we use non-linear optimisation to determine the number of cases selected that will minimise the sum of squared error between population proportions and the expected proportion of completed interviews, while satisfying constraints including that selections within a stratum may not exceed the available sample and that completed surveys equal the target number of completed surveys.

Sample profile

The final sample profile along with comparison to ABS benchmarks is shown below in Table 3.

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[8] SamplePages was the mobile RDD sample supplier.
[9] SamplePages was the mobile RDD sample supplier.

Table 3   **Sample profile (unweighted)**

Subgroup	Online members (completed)	Offline members (completed)	Total (completed)	Benchmark[10]
Male	46.3	36.1	46.2	49.0
Female	52.6	63.9	52.7	51.0
18-24 years	4.3	0.0	4.3	11.0
25-34 years	11.8	0.0	11.7	18.8
35-44 years	16.7	2.8	16.5	17.5
45-54 years	15.8	5.6	15.7	16.2
55-64 years	18.5	11.1	18.4	14.9
65-74 years	20.4	19.4	20.4	12.0
75 years or more	12.4	61.1	13.0	9.5
Sydney	20.8	8.3	20.6	20.6
Rest of NSW	11.1	16.7	11.2	11.3
Melbourne	18.4	16.7	18.4	19.7
Rest of VIC	6.2	13.9	6.3	6.3
Brisbane	9.1	2.8	9.0	9.7
Rest of QLD	8.9	11.1	9.0	10.4
Adelaide	7.3	11.1	7.4	5.4
Rest of SA	2.0	2.8	2.0	1.6
Perth	8.1	8.3	8.1	8.1
Rest of WA	2.2	2.8	2.2	2.2
Hobart	1.3	0.0	1.3	0.9
Rest of TAS	1.2	2.8	1.2	1.2

[10] Australian Bureau of Statistics (September 2021 ERPS).

Subgroup	Online members (completed)	Offline members (completed)	Total (completed)	Benchmark[10]
Darwin	0.3	0.0	0.3	0.6
Rest of NT	0.2	0.0	0.2	0.3
ACT	2.7	2.8	2.7	1.7

Contact methodology

The contact methodology adopted for online Life in Australia™ members is an initial survey invitation via email and SMS (where available), followed by multiple email reminders and a reminder SMS. Up to 5 reminders in different modes (including email, SMS, and telephone) were administered within the fieldwork period. Telephone non-response of online panel members who have not yet competed the survey commences in the second week of fieldwork and consists of reminder calls encouraging completion of the online survey.

Offline members with a valid mobile telephone number were also sent a short SMS invitation that contained a link to the survey as well as the reminder SMS halfway through fieldwork.

The exact contact dates are shown below in Table 4.

Table 4   Summary of contact schedule

Contact type	Date	Population
Phone interviews	19-Aug-24 - 1-Sep-24	Offline only
SMS	19-Aug-24	Both
Email	19-Aug-24	Online only
Email	20-Aug-24	Online only
SMS	20-Aug-24	Both
Email	23-Aug-24	Online only
Reminder calls	27-Aug-24 - 1-Sep-24	Online only
Email	27-Aug-24	Online only
SMS	27-Aug-24	Both

The following call procedures were implemented:

- A 4-call regime for mobile sample with an upper limit of 6 calls and a 6-call regime for landline sample, with an upper limit of 9 call attempts
- For mobile phones, capping the maximum number of unanswered call attempts to no more than four so as to avoid appearing overzealous in our attempts to achieve interviews
- Contact attempts were spread over weekday evenings (6:30 pm to 8:30 pm), weekday late afternoon/early evening (4:30 pm to 6:30 pm), Saturdays (11 am to 5 pm) and Sundays (11 am to 5 pm) (weekdays between 9 am to 4:30 pm are typically reserved for appointment management)

- Appointments were set for any time that the call centre is operational (weekdays between 9 am to 8:30 pm; weekends 11 am to 5 pm)
- 1800 number operation to address sample member queries and support the response maximisation effort and the establishment of a respondent page on our website (with responses to frequently asked questions).

Life in Australia™ members were able to request an email to complete the survey online.

Interviewing was conducted in English only.

Incentives

All members were offered an incentive to complete the survey. The incentives offered for completing the survey had a value of $10. The incentive options were:

- Coles / Myer gift card
- Points redeemable as an electronic gift card from GiftPay
- Charitable donation to a designated charity:
  - Children's Ground
  - Food For Change
  - RizeUp
  - Spinal Cord Injuries Australia
  - WIRES Australian Wildlife Rescue Organisation

All members could choose to donate the amount to a nominated charity or could opt out of receiving an incentive.

Other response maximisation procedures

Other procedures to maximise response for the survey included:

- Leaving messages on answering machines and voicemails.
- Operation of an 1800 number throughout the survey period, to help establish survey bona fides, address sample members' queries, and encourage response
- Provision of the Social Research Centre / Life in Australia™ website upon request
- Focus on interviewer training and respondent liaison techniques during interviewer briefing and throughout fieldwork.

CATI fieldwork

Interviewer briefing

All interviewers and supervisors selected to work on the survey attended a two-hour briefing session, which focused on all aspects of survey administration, including:

- Survey context and background, including a detailed explanation of Life in Australia™
- Survey procedures and sample management protocols
- The importance of respondent liaison procedures
- Strategies to maintain co-operation
- Detailed examination of the survey questionnaire, with a focus on the use of pre-coded response lists and item-specific data quality issues.

After the initial briefing session, interviewers engaged in comprehensive practice interviewing. A total of 10 interviewers were briefed on the survey.

Fieldwork quality control procedures

The in-field quality monitoring techniques applied to this project included:

- Monitoring (by remote listening) of each interviewer within their first three shifts, whereby the supervisor listened in to at least 75 per cent of the interview and provided comprehensive feedback on data quality issues and respondent liaison technique
- Validation of 19.5% of the telephone surveys conducted via remote monitoring (covering the interviewers' approach and commitment-gaining skills, as well as the conduct of the interviews)
- Field team de-briefing after the first shift and, thereafter, whenever there was important information to impart to the field team in relation to data quality, consistency of interview administration, techniques to avoid refusals, appointment-making conventions, or project performance
- Examination of 'Other (specify)' responses
- Monitoring of timestamps for segments of the survey and overall time taken to complete the survey
- Monitoring of the interview-to-refusal ratio by interviewer.

Response outcomes

Completion rate

The Social Research Centre uses standard industry definitions for calculating outcome rates (American Association for Public Opinion Research, 2023; Callegaro & DiSogra, 2008). The completion rate (COMR) represents completed interviews as a proportion of all Life in Australia™ members invited to participate in this survey. The overall completion rate for the survey was 73.8% (online population = 74.0%; offline population = 58.1%).

Cumulative response rate

Completion rates only tell part of the story. The panellists invited to participate in this survey had to agree to participate in Life in Australia™ in the first place, then provide essential details in order to join the panel by completing the panel profile and finally remain in the panel until they were invited to complete this survey.

The cumulative response rate (CUMRR2) takes account of non-response at each point. It is the product of the recruitment rate (RECR), the profile rate (PROR), the retention rate (RETR) and the completion rate: CUMRR2 = RECR × PROR × RETR × COMR. The recruitment rate is the rate at which eligible individuals agree to join the panel. The profile rate is the rate at which initially consenting individuals complete the panel profile, thus joining the panel. The retention rate is the proportion of active panellists at the time of this survey out of all those who joined the panel.

Because Life in Australia™ is made up of panellists recruited at different points in time, the recruitment, profile, and retention rates shown are weighted in proportion to the composition of the panellists invited to complete this survey.

The cumulative response rate for this survey was 4.0% (see Table 5).

Table 5   Summary of panel outcome rates

Code	Name	%
RECR	Recruitment rate	9.5
PROR	Profile rate	95.0
RETR	Retention rate	61.0

Code	Name	%
COMR	Completion rate	73.8
CUMRR2	Cumulative response rate 2	4.0

Data processing and outputs

Coding

Open-ended questions and back-coding of questions with an 'Other (specify)' option was undertaken by experienced, fully briefed coders. Outputs were validated in accordance with ISO 20252 procedures, using an independent validation approach.

Code frame extension was undertaken and additional responses were included for questions A11, B1, B1a, B1b, B1c, B13, B14, C6_new, C7_NEW, C9_NEW, and E1. The new codes have been included in the questionnaire as provided in Appendix 1.

Data quality checks for online completes

Data quality checks for online completes consisted of checks for:

- Logic checks
- Proportion of 'don't know' and 'refused' responses
- Speeding
- Straightlining
- Verbatim responses to open-ended questions

We consider all these indicators when determining whether a respondent is removed for poor data quality. Data quality indicators other than verbatim responses are used to identify potentially problematic cases. Generally, verbatim responses are decisive, with those indicating thoughtful engagement with the survey being kept and others being removed (e.g. nonsense responses like 'asdfgh,' *non sequiturs*, swearing).

Data quality is tracked for panel members over time and those with repeated issues are retired from the Life in Australia™.

After these checks, no cases were removed due to poor data quality.

Weighting

Overview

Sample surveys are a commonly used method for drawing inferences about a population based on responses from just a subset of it. To be able to draw such inferences requires a probability sample – one in which each element of the population has a known, non-zero chance of selection. Since some units in the population may not have a chance of selection (for instance, persons without a telephone have no chance of selection for a telephone survey) and there may be different rates of response across unit characteristics, many sample surveys yield subsets that imperfectly cover their target populations despite the best possible sample design and data collection practices (Valliant *et al.,* 2013). In such situations, weighting can reduce the extent of any biases introduced through non-coverage.

For Life in Australia™, the approach for deriving weights generally consists of the following steps:

- Compute a base weight for each respondent as the product of three weights:

a.   Their enrolment weight, accounting for the initial chances of selection and subsequent post-stratification to key demographic benchmarks

b.   An adjustment for probability of selection into the sample of the specific survey.

c.   Their response propensity weight, estimated from enrolment information available for both respondents and nonrespondents to the present survey.

- Adjust the base weights so that they satisfy the latest population benchmarks for several demographic characteristics.

The first step is essential in providing the statistical framework necessary for making population inferences from a sample survey. The second step accounts for the selection of the sample for the specific survey, which varies by stratum. The third step accounts for nonresponse bias and ensures that survey estimates are consistent with other sources. Each step in the weighting will now be covered in turn.

Enrolment weights

Members of Life in Australia™ were originally recruited through a national dual-frame telephone survey in 2015, and subsequent replenishment rounds conducted through a variety of mechanisms, including mobile telephone, address-based sampling, SMS and IVR (interactive voice response).Design weights for original recruits were derived as the inverse of their probability of selection, based on the approach of Best (2010), and then adjusted to reflect the population distributions for sex, location, age group, highest level of education, household internet access and telephone status. The method for adjusting the design weights was generalised regression (GREG) weighting which uses non-linear optimisation to minimise the distance between the design and adjusted weights, subject to the weights meeting the benchmarks (Deville and Särndal, 1993).

As more panellists were recruited, the method for calculating the panel weights was simplified to use a model-based approach (Valliant *et al.,* 2000; Elliott and Valliant, 2017). Such methods[11] avoid the increasingly cumbersome calculation of selection probabilities for multiple recruitment rounds involving multiple sampling frames, the increasing complexity of weighting, and the decreasing efficiency of the weights, at the same time as generating weights that align with population totals for a wide range of characteristics.

Probability of selection weight

Sample selection was completed using a stratified sample design, with 40 strata defined by cross-classifying age (5 groups), education (2 groups), gender (2 groups), and use of a language other than English at home (2 groups). This stratification is enforced to ensure representation across the four demographic variables but has the consequence of altering the probability of selection for different groups. As such, panel weights needed adjustment to reflect the selection process. Within each stratum, the probability of selection is equal to the number of selections in the stratum divided by the population of the stratum. The panel weight was divided by this probability of selection to adjust for the selection process. This resulted in a weight which captures both the probability of inclusion in the panel, and selection in the survey.

Response propensity weights

As is typical for a panel survey, not all members respond to all waves, some withdraw or are retired from the panel and new members are recruited. To limit the impact of such events on the representativeness of estimates made from respondents, enrolment weights were adjusted through the use of propensity scores (Rosenbaum and Rubin, 1983). These were calculated by means of a logistic regression model predicting the likelihood of a panel member participating in the current wave, conditional on characteristics available for both respondents and non-respondents. The model incorporates a wide range of demographic, attitudinal and behavioural characteristics collected from all panel members.

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[11] So-called "superpopulation" models are equivalent to generalised regression if the inverse selection probabilities are all set to 1.

To reduce the impact of very low or very high values, the predicted probabilities were collapsed into classes (after Cochran, 1968), with propensity scores assigned as the mean probability within each class. The base weights were then calculated as the ratio of the enrolment weight to the propensity class score.

Adjusted weights

To ensure that estimates made from the dataset are representative of Australians aged 18 years or older, the base weights were adjusted using GREG weighting so that, as described above, their distribution matches external benchmarks for the key demographic parameters. The adjustment variables were determined from a number of considerations:

- Which variables are most associated with response propensity?
- Which variables are most associated with key outcome variables?

With these in mind, the characteristics used for adjustment are shown in **Error! Reference source not found.**. Benchmarks for these variables were sourced from official Australian Bureau of Statistics sources including the 2021 Census, supplemented by the latest Demographic Statistics, and the 2020-21 National Health Survey.

Large differences in weights may lead to large variances in survey estimates, and so limiting these variations can improve the precision of estimates. The use of constraints in GREG weighting aims to reduce the variance at the same time as limiting increases in the bias. The method applied is incorporated directly in the calibration process. The impact of setting bounds on the weights is assessed by comparing the weighting efficiency (Kish, 1992) of adjusted weights for different constraints. Bounded weights are generally preferred when their efficiency is close to that of the unbounded weights.

For this survey, there were 3004 respondents aged 18+ years and the weighting efficiency was 66.18%, representing an effective base of 1988.

Table 6   **Characteristics used for adjusting base weights, with benchmark totals and data sources for cross-sectional weights**

Category	Benchmark Target (#)	Benchmark Target (%)	Source
Number of adults in the household			**(B)**
One	2,921,060	13.99	
Two	11,776,407	56.40	
Three or more	6,182,241	29.61	
Age group by Highest education			**(A)**
18-24 years	2,369,446	11.35	
25-34 years x Below Bachelor	2,177,914	10.43	
25-34 years x Bachelor or higher	1,725,725	8.27	
35-44 years x Below Bachelor	2,078,040	9.95	
35-44 years x Bachelor or higher	1,639,326	7.85	
45-54 years x Below Bachelor	2,195,779	10.52	
45-54 years x Bachelor or higher	1,098,068	5.26	
55-64 years x Below Bachelor	2,272,832	10.89	
55-64 years x Bachelor or higher	766,722	3.67	
65+ years x Below Bachelor	3,736,597	17.90	
65+ years x Bachelor or higher	819,259	3.92	
Gender			**(A)**
Man or male	10,614,696	50.84	
Woman or female	10,265,012	49.16	
Language other than English spoken at home			**(A)**
Yes	5,041,131	24.14	
No	15,838,577	75.86	

Category	Benchmark Target (#)	Benchmark Target (%)	Source
Geographic location			**(A)**
Capital city	13,995,263	67.03	
Rest of state	6,884,445	32.97	
State or territory of residence			**(A)**
NSW	6,641,340	31.81	
VIC	5,372,461	25.73	
QLD	4,193,691	20.09	
SA	1,489,153	7.13	
WA	2,158,828	10.34	
TAS	468,157	2.24	
NT	181,025	0.87	
ACT	375,054	1.80	

Sources:
(A) Census 2021 with ERP updates
(B) National Health Survey, 2020-21

Treatment of missing values

The regression weighting approach used to adjust the base weights requires that there are no missing values across the adjustment variables or values other than those for which there are reliable benchmarks. Like most surveys, however, some Life in Australia™ respondents did not provide answers to all questions commonly used for weighting.

A statistical model (Stekhoven and Buehlmann, 2012) was applied to each item with missing values to impute the most likely value for a respondent, conditional upon their other responses. Given the very low prevalence of missing values overall (generally much less than 5% for any item), the imputation process is expected to have a negligible impact on weighted estimates made from the dataset.

Precision of estimates

Estimates made from the survey should be seen as a point-in-time approximation of the underlying population. It may be that if the survey were repeated again at a different time, a slightly different subset of persons would take part and give a slightly different set of responses. To account for the natural variation that would occur through many hypothetical replications of a survey, it is common to associate a level of precision with estimates made from the one survey that we have observed. One such metric is the "margin of error" for a survey estimate, which is used to form a "confidence interval" around the estimate. An example of these concepts is contained in the following statement:

An estimated 50% of persons agreed with survey statement X, with a margin of error of ± 1.2%. This leads to a 95% confidence interval for X of 48.8% to 51.2%.

This means that if our survey were repeated many times and the weights, estimates, margins of error and confidence intervals calculated for each survey, then 95% of the confidence intervals would contain the true population value.

Another often-reported metric is the "relative standard error" of an estimate, which expresses the precision of an estimate as a proportion of the estimate itself. Ideally, the ratio of the precision[12] to the estimate should be small (much less than 25%), indicating that the amount of uncertainty is small relative to the estimate. Estimates with RSEs greater than 25% should be used with caution and those with RSEs greater than 50% should be considered too unreliable for general use.

For this survey, the margins of error and relative standard errors for a range of estimates are shown in **Error! Reference source not found.**. These may be used to compare the uncertainty of estimates derived from the survey – an estimate with a margin of error of ± 1.2% may be reported with considerably more confidence than an estimate with a margin of error of ± 12%, for example.

Table 7   **Margin of error (MoE) and relative standard error (RSE) of estimates**

Proportion of respondents in an item category	RSE (%)	MoE (%)
0-5%	43.2	0.4
20-25%	3.5	1.5
25-50%	2.5	1.7
5-20%	6.4	1.2
50-75%	1.4	1.6
75-100%	0.7	1.2

Longitudinal weights

In addition to the cross-sectional weights, longitudinal weights for those who have completed both the 2022 and 2024 waves will be calculated. This will be done by first filtering to respondents who completed the 2022 wave. Similar to cross-sectional weights, the weights used in the 2022 wave were then be adjusted for non-response using a logistic regression model. However, this model instead predicts the likelihood of a sample member participating in the 2024 wave, based on their responses to the 2022 wave. Finally, propensity-adjusted weights are re-aligned with population totals that can be found in **Error! Reference source not found.**.

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[12] Specifically, the estimate's standard error.

Table 8   **Characteristics used for adjusting base weights, with benchmark totals and data sources for longitudinal weights**

Category	Benchmark Target (#)	Benchmark Target (%)	Source
State or territory of residence			**(A)**
New South Wales	6,383,208	31.86	
Victoria	5,261,500	26.26	
Queensland	3,986,990	19.90	
South Australia	1,400,481	6.99	
Western Australia	2,054,078	10.25	
Tasmania	428,097	2.14	
Northern Territory	184,604	0.92	
Australian Capital Territory	334,887	1.67	
Geographic location			**(A)**
Capital city	13,237,683	66.08	
Rest of state	6,796,162	33.92	
Gender			**(A)**
Male	9,826,039	49.05	
Female	10,207,806	50.95	
Language other than English spoken at home			(A)
Yes	4,645,064	23.19	
No	15,388,781	76.81	
Number of adults in the household			**(B)**
1	3,417,205	17.06	
2	11,060,137	55.21	
3 or more	5,556,503	27.74	
Age group by Highest education			**(A)**

Category	Benchmark Target (#)	Benchmark Target (%)	Source
18-24 years	2,322,014	11.59	
25-34 years x Bachelor or higher	1,475,414	7.36	
25-34 years x Below Bachelor	2,353,788	11.75	
35-44 years x Bachelor or higher	1,248,325	6.23	
35-44 years x Below Bachelor	2,205,478	11.01	
45-54 years x Bachelor or higher	841,866	4.20	
45-54 years x Below Bachelor	2,398,580	11.97	
55-64 years x Bachelor or higher	664,543	3.32	
55-64 years x Below Bachelor	2,328,564	11.62	
65+ years x Bachelor or higher	570,747	2.85	
65+ years x Below Bachelor	3,624,526	18.09	

Sources:
(A) Census 2016 with ERP March 2021 updates
(B) National Health Survey, 2017-18

Electronic data provision

A final version of the data file (with weights) was provided in SPSS format as both a 2024 standalone data file and a longitudinal timeseries file. Supporting documentation, including a data dictionary, was also provided.

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Appendix 1: Questionnaire

EMPLOY1   Which one of the following best describes your current employment status?

(READ OUT)

1.   Self-employed
2.   Employed
3.   Employed casually
4.   Unemployed
5.   Engaged in home duties
6.   A student
7.   Retired
8.   Unable to work (for example, due to a disability)
9.   A carer (for example, for a family member or friend)
96   Other (please specify)

98.   (Don't know) / Not sure
99.   (Refused) / Prefer not to say

*(ALL)
A3   What is the postcode of your current residence?

1.   (Predictive text verbatim text box) *PROGRAMMER NOTE USE POSTCODE LOOKUP LIST
        LOCATED HERE

98.   (Don't know) / Not sure
99.   (Refused) / Prefer not to say

*(ALL)
A12   Which of the following best describes your **current gender identity**?

*Gender refers to current gender, which may be different to sex recorded at birth and may be
different to what is indicated on legal documents.*

1   Man or male
2   Woman or female
3   Non-binary / Gender fluid
96.   I use a different term (please describe)

98.   (Don't know) / Not sure
99.   (Refused) / Prefer not to say

*(ALL)
A4   Which category best describes your sexual orientation?

(READ OUT)

1.   Straight (heterosexual)
2.   Gay
3.   Lesbian
4.   Bisexual
5.   Queer
96.   Prefer to self-describe (please specify)

98.   (Don't know / Questioning) / Not sure / Questioning
99.   (Refused) / Prefer not to say

*(ALL)
A5   Do you identify as any of the following?

Please select all that apply.
(MULTIPLE RESPONSE)

(READ OUT)

1. Person with disability
2. Person with long-term physical health condition/s
3. Person with long-term mental health condition/s
4. Carer of someone who has a disability, mental health condition, alcohol or other drug issue, chronic condition, dementia, terminal or serious illness or who needs care due to ageing
97. I do not identify as any of these *(EXCLUSIVE)

98. (Don't know) / Not sure *(EXCLUSIVE)
99. (Refused) / Prefer not to say *(EXCLUSIVE)

*(ALL)
A7   Which of the following best describes your household?

(READ OUT)

1. Person living alone
2. Couple living alone
3. Couple with non-dependent child/children
4. Couple with dependent child/children
5. Couple with dependent and non-dependent children
6. Single parent with non-dependent child/children
7. Single parent with dependent child/children
8. Single parent with dependent and non-dependent children
9. Couple living with other family members (e.g., parents)
10. Non-related adults sharing house/apartment/flat
96. Other (please specify)

98. (Don't know) / Not sure
99. (Refused) / Prefer not to say

*(A7=3-8, LIVING WITH CHILD/CHILDREN)
A8   What is the age of the youngest child living with you, some or all of the time?

1. 0-4 years old
2. 5-9 years old
3. 10-14 years old
4. 15-18 years old
5. 19+ years old

98. (Don't know) / Not sure
99. (Refused) / Prefer not to say

*(ALL)
A9   On a scale of one to seven, where one is terrible and seven is excellent, how would you rate your mental health over the last six months?

1. 1 – Terrible
2. 2
3. 3
4. 4
5. 5
6. 6
7. 7 – Excellent
97. Not applicable

98. (Don't know) / Not sure
99. (Refused) / Prefer not to say

*(ALL)
A10   During the past six months, how often has your mental health affected your relationships?

1. Often

2. Sometimes
3. Not often
4. Never

98. (Don't know) / Not sure
99. (Refused) / Prefer not to say

*(A10=1-2, MENTAL HEALTH HAS AFFECTED YOUR RELATIONSHIPS OFTEN OR SOMETIMES)
A11   How has it affected your relationships?
           Please select all that apply

[PROGRAMMING: MULTIPLE CHOICE]

1. Difficult to communicate effectively
2. Unable to be emotionally available
3. Insecurity, jealousy, or lack of trust
4. Unable to manage stress
5. Lower self-esteem
6. Lack of empathy for others
7. Diminished interest in sex or other physical intimacy
8. Becoming withdrawn or isolated
9. Anger or irritability
10. Fatigue or exhaustion
11. Problems with executive function (e.g., inability to focus, problem solve)
12. Experiencing mental health issues
96. Other (please specify)

98. (Don't know) / Not sure
99. (Refused) / Prefer not to say

SECTION B: MEANINGFUL RELATIONSHIPS

*(ALL)
REL_INTRO   Relationships Australia are really interested in the variety of important relationships people experience in their lives. The results of this survey will be used to support Relationships Australia to better understand Australian relationships and inform their advocacy, policy development and future research.

*(ALL)

B1   Thinking now of the three people closest to you and their relationship to you. Firstly, we would like to ask you about your most important, meaningful relationship.

Would you say the person who is closest to you is your…?

(READ OUT)

1. Aunt
2. Brother
3. Daughter
4. Father
5. Friend
6. Grandchild
7. Grandparent
8. Mother
9. Neighbour
10. Nephew
11. Niece
12. Partner (e.g., a sexual, romantic or intimate relationship. Other terms for this could include boyfriend, girlfriend, spouse, de facto, intimate partner, husband, wife)
13. Sister
14. Son
15. Uncle
16. Cousin
17. In-laws
18. Colleague
96. Other (please specify)

98.   (Don't know) / Not sure
99.   (Refused) / Prefer not to say

*(ALL)
B1a   And the second closest person?

           (READ OUT)

           1.   Aunt
           2.   Brother
           3.   Daughter
           4.   Father
           5.   Friend
           6.   Grandchild
           7.   Grandparent
           8.   Mother
           9.   Neighbour
           10.   Nephew
           11.   Niece
           12.   Partner (e.g., a sexual, romantic or intimate relationship. Other terms for this could include
                 boyfriend, girlfriend, spouse, de facto, intimate partner, husband, wife)
           13.   Sister
           14.   Son
           15.   Uncle
           16.   Cousin
           17.   In-laws
           18.   Colleague
           96.   Other (please specify)

           98.   (Don't know) / Not sure
           99.   (Refused) / Prefer not to say

*(ALL)
B1b   And the third closest person?

           (READ OUT)

           1.   Aunt
           2.   Brother
           3.   Daughter
           4.   Father
           5.   Friend
           6.   Grandchild
           7.   Grandparent
           8.   Mother
           9.   Neighbour
           10.   Nephew
           11.   Niece
           12.   Partner (e.g., a sexual, romantic or intimate relationship. Other terms for this could include
                 boyfriend, girlfriend, spouse, de facto, intimate partner, husband, wife)
           13.   Sister
           14.   Son
           15.   Uncle
           16.   Cousin
           17.   In-laws
           18.   Colleague
           96.   Other (please specify)

           98.   (Don't know) / Not sure
           99.   (Refused) / Prefer not to say

*(ALL)
B1c   Who do you consider to be the most challenging relationship in your life? This can be one you
           previously listed or a different relationship.

(READ OUT)

1. Aunt
2. Brother
3. Daughter
4. Father
5. Friend
6. Grandchild
7. Grandparent
8. Mother
9. Neighbour
10. Nephew
11. Niece
12. Partner (e.g., a sexual, romantic or intimate relationship. Other terms for this could include boyfriend, girlfriend, spouse, de facto, intimate partner, husband, wife)
13. Sister
14. Son
15. Uncle
16. Cousin
17. In-laws
18. Colleague
96. Other (please specify)

98. (Don't know) / Not sure
99. (Refused) / Prefer not to say

*(B1c=1-96, IDENTIFIED THEIR MOST CHALLENGING RELATIONSHIP)
CHA_INTRO   The following questions ask about your most challenging relationship.

*(B1c=1-96, IDENTIFIED THEIR MOST CHALLENGING RELATIONSHIP)
B1d   How would you characterise this relationship?
              Please select all that apply

              (READ OUT) [PROGRAMMER: MULTIPLE CHOICE]

1. Conflictual
2. Distant
3. Fearful
4. Co-operative

98. (Don't know) / Not sure
99. (Refused) / Prefer not to say

*(B1d=1, CONFLICTUAL IN A RELATIONSHIP)
B1e   When you have conflict in this relationship...
              Please select all that apply

              (READ OUT)

1. I often seem to get blamed for issues
2. I feel criticised by them
3. They do not accept responsibility for their part in the fight
4. They often withdraw from me and the situation

98. (Don't know) / Not sure
99. (Refused) / Prefer not to say

*(B1c=1-96, IDENTIFIED THEIR MOST CHALLENGING RELATIONSHIP)
B1f   On a scale of one to seven, where one is very distressed and seven is not at all distressed, how distressed have you felt about this relationship over the last six months?

1. 1 – Very distressed
2. 2

3. 3
4. 4
5. 5
6. 6
7. 7 – Not at all distressed
97. Not applicable

98. (Don't know) / Not sure
99. (Refused) / Prefer not to say

*(B1=5 OR 12, SELECTED FRIEND OR PARTNER AS MOST MEANINGFUL RELATIONSHIP)
B2_NEW   The following questions ask about your most important, meaningful relationship.

What is the gender of your (INSERT 'partner' IF B1=12, OR 'friend' IF B1=5)?

Gender refers to current gender, which may be different to sex recorded at birth and may be different to what is indicated on legal documents.

1 Man or male
2 Woman or female
3 Non-binary / Gender fluid
96. They use a different term (please describe)

98. (Don't know) / Not sure
99. (Refused) / Prefer not to say

*(B1=1-96, IDENTIFIED THEIR MOST MEANINGFUL RELATIONSHIP)
B6   Considering now only the **positive qualities** of your relationship and ignoring the   negative ones, please evaluate your relationship on the following qualities: Our relationship is...?

(STATEMENTS) (RANDOMISE)

*(ONL: DISPLAY FULL GRID)

a. Interesting
b. Full
c. Sturdy
d. Enjoyable
e. Good
f. Friendly
g. Hopeful

(RESPONSE FRAME) (READ OUT)

1. Not at all
2. A tiny bit
3. A little
4. Somewhat
5. Mostly
6. Very
7. Extremely
8. Completely

98. (Don't know) / Not sure
99. (Refused) / Prefer not to say

*(B1=1-96, IDENTIFIED THEIR MOST MEANINGFUL RELATIONSHIP)
B7   Considering now only the **negative qualities** of your relationship and ignoring the positive ones, please evaluate your relationship on the following qualities: Our relationship is...

(STATEMENTS) (RANDOMISE)
*(ONL: DISPLAY FULL GRID)

a. Bad

b.   Lonely
c.   Discouraging
d.   Boring
e.   Empty
f.   Fragile
g.   Miserable

(RESPONSE FRAME) (READ OUT)

1.   Not at all
2.   A tiny bit
3.   A little
4.   Somewhat
5.   Mostly
6.   Very
7.   Extremely
8.   Completely

98.   (Don't know) / Not sure
99.   (Refused) / Prefer not to say

*(B1=1-96, IDENTIFIED THEIR MOST MEANINGFUL RELATIONSHIP)
B10   To what extent do you agree or disagree with the following statements?

          (STATEMENTS) (RANDOMISE)
          *(ONL: DISPLAY FULL GRID)

a.   We have fun together
e.   I know I can depend on them
b.   We communicate openly about our problems
c.   We don't spend enough time together
d.   We have lots of disagreements
f.   I feel confident we can deal with whatever problems might come up

          (RESPONSE FRAME) (READ OUT)

1.   Strongly agree
2.   Agree
3.   Neither agree nor disagree
4.   Disagree
5.   Strongly disagree

98.   (Don't know) / Not sure
99.   (Refused) / Prefer not to say

*(B1=1-96, IDENTIFIED THEIR MOST MEANINGFUL RELATIONSHIP)
B11   On a scale of one to seven, where one is 'not at all' and seven is 'to a great extent', to what extent do you feel safe disagreeing with them?

1.   1 - Not at all safe
2.   2
3.   3
4.   4
5.   5
6.   6
7.   7 – To a great extent, safe
97.   Not applicable

98.   (Don't know) / Not sure
99.   (Refused) / Prefer not to say

*(B11=1-3, FEELS NOT SAFE WITH DISAGREEING WITH THEM)
B11a   What do you fear when you have a disagreement?

          Please select all that apply.

(MULTIPLE RESPONSE)
(READ OUT)

1. Fear for my wellbeing / worried it could become verbally abusive or aggressive [DISPLAY IF B11=1, Not at all safe]
2. Worried my concerns will be dismissed or invalidated
3. Worried it will lead to a withdrawal of affection or may end the relationship
4. Worried it will make the fight worse
5. I don't feel confident expressing myself effectively

98. (Don't know) / Not sure*(EXCLUSIVE)
99. (Refused) / Prefer not to say*(EXCLUSIVE)

*(B1=1-96, IDENTIFIED THEIR MOST MEANINGFUL RELATIONSHIP)
B12   When things are difficult in this relationship, where do you go for support?

        Please select all that apply.
        (MULTIPLE RESPONSE)
        (READ OUT)

1. Family
2. A friend
3. Colleague
4. Neighbour
5. Priest/Imam/Rabbi/other religious leader
6. Community leader
7. Doctor
8. Professional support, e.g., a counsellor
9. Books/publications, either physical or online
10. Interactive online sources, e.g., forums, Facebook groups
13. Search engine, such as Google
11. I manage on my own
96. Other (please specify)
12. We don't have difficulties *EXCLUSIVE)

98. (Don't know) / Not sure*(EXCLUSIVE)
99. (Refused) / Prefer not to say*(EXCLUSIVE)

*(B12=11, MANAGES RELATIONSHIP DIFFICULTIES ON YOUR OWN)
B12a   If you manage your relationship difficulties on your own, when would you seek external support?

        Please select all that apply.
        (MULTIPLE RESPONSE)
        (READ OUT)

1. If we had repeated unresolved conflicts
2. If we stopped being able to communicate easily about the problem
3. If the other person began emotionally withdrawing, losing intimacy, and disconnecting from the relationship
4. If we contemplated ending the relationship
5. When someone else told me to seek support
6. Never^

98. (Don't know) / Not sure*(EXCLUSIVE)
99. (Refused) / Prefer not to say*(EXCLUSIVE)

*(B1=1-96, IDENTIFIED THEIR MOST MEANINGFUL RELATIONSHIP)
B13   There are a range of pressures that impact all types of relationships. Which, if any, of the following pressures have impacted this relationship in the last six months? *e.g. what causes stress in your relationship?*

        Please select all that apply.
        (MULTIPLE RESPONSE)
        (READ OUT)

(RANDOMISE)

1.   Mental health (diagnosed and undiagnosed conditions)
2.   Alcohol use
3.   Drug use
4.   Gambling
5.   Unfulfilled expectations
6.   Cultural differences
7.   Controlling behaviour
8.   Fear
19.   Cost of living
10.   Social media use
11.   Different values/beliefs
12.   Division of childcare tasks
13.   Division of household tasks
14.   Money problems
15.   Study or work commitments
16.   Discrimination or prejudice
18.   Health issues
20.   Caring responsibilities (E.g., for disabled or elderly family member)
21.   Distance (e.g., long distance relationship)
96.   Other (please specify)
17.   There have been no pressures in the last six months *(EXCLUSIVE)

98.   (Don't know) / Not sure *(EXCLUSIVE)
99.   (Refused) / Prefer not to say *(EXCLUSIVE)

*(B1=1-96, IDENTIFIED THEIR MOST MEANINGFUL RELATIONSHIP)
*PROGRAMMER NOTE: DO NOT PROMPT QUESTION IF ONLY ONE ANSWER SELECTED AT B13. AUTO-CODE ACCORDINGLY INSTEAD
B14   Which pressure is affecting this relationship the most?

(READ OUT)

*(PROGRAMMER NOTE: SHOW ONLY THOSE SELECTED AT B13)

1.   Mental health (diagnosed and undiagnosed conditions)
2.   Alcohol use
3.   Drug use
4.   Gambling
5.   Unfulfilled expectations
6.   Cultural differences
7.   Controlling behaviour
8.   Fear
19.   Cost of living
10.   Social media use
11.   Different values/beliefs
12.   Division of childcare tasks
13.   Division of household tasks
14.   Money problems
15.   Study or work commitments
16.   Discrimination or prejudice
18.   Health issues
20.   Caring responsibilities (E.g., for disabled or elderly family member)
21.   Distance (e.g., long distance relationship)
96.   Other (please specify)

98.   (Don't know) / Not sure
99.   (Refused) / Prefer not to say *(EXCLUSIVE)

*(B14≠98 OR 99, PROVIDED ANSWER AT B14)
B14a   On a scale of one to seven, where one is very distressed and seven is not at all distressed, how distressed have you felt about this relationship pressure over the last six months?

1. 1 – Very distressed
2. 2
3. 3
4. 4
5. 5
6. 6
7. 7 – Not at all distressed
97. Not applicable

98. (Don't know) / Not sure
99. (Refused) / Prefer not to say

*(B14≠98 OR 99, PROVIDED ANSWER AT B14)
B15   What strategies, if any, are you are using to manage this pressure?

1. Communicating about the pressure
2. Compromising or providing understanding to them / each other
3. Seeking professional help
4. Using time management or scheduling
5. Providing them / each other with emotional support
6. Financial management
7. Stress management
8. Self care practises
9. Accepting the situation / letting go
10. Separation or providing each other with space
11. Faith / spirituality
12. Avoiding the pressure
13. Planning ahead
96. Other strategies (please specify)

14. I am not using any strategies to manage^

98. (Don't know) / Not sure
99. (Refused) / Prefer not to say *(EXCLUSIVE)

*(B1=1-96, IDENTIFIED THEIR MOST MEANINGFUL RELATIONSHIP)
B16   Do you and *(IF B1≠96 DISPLAY 'your' AND PIPED IN ANSWER FROM B1, IF B1=96 DISPLAY: the person) that you are closest to live in the same household?

1. Yes
2. No

98. (Don't know) / Not sure
99. (Refused) / Prefer not to say *(EXCLUSIVE)

SECTION C: OTHER RELATIONSHIPS

*(ALL)
INTROC   We would now like to ask a few questions relating to partner relationships in general.

*(ALL)
C3   Are you currently in, or have you ever been in a relationship with multiple partners at once?

IF NECESSARY: *This is sometimes known as a polyamorous relationship, consensual non-monogamous relationship or ethical non-monogamous relationship. It is different from infidelity because everyone is aware and consents.*

1. Yes
2. No

98. (Don't know) / Not sure
99. (Refused) / Prefer not to say

*(ALL)
C4   Have you experienced a break-up, separation or divorce?

IF NECESSARY: This refers to a partnered relationship that you have personally been in, not observing anyone else's partnered relationship (e.g., parents' divorce).

Please select all that apply.
(MULTIPLE RESPONSE)
(PROBE TO CODE FRAME)

1.   Yes, a break-up
2.   Yes, a separation
3.   Yes, a divorce
5.   No *(EXCLUSIVE)

98.   (Don't know) / Not sure *(EXCLUSIVE)
99.   (Refused) / Prefer not to say *(EXCLUSIVE)

*(C4=1-3, EXPERIENCED BREAK-UP, SEPARATION OR DIVORCE)
C5_new   Following this experience, did you receive any **valuable** support from any of the following sources?

Please select all that apply.
(MULTIPLE RESPONSE)
(READ OUT)

1.   Family
2.   A friend
3.   Colleague
4.   Neighbour
5.   Priest/Imam/Rabbi/other religious leader
6.   Community leader
7.   Doctor
8.   Professional support, e.g., a counsellor
9.   Books/publications, either physical or online
10.   Interactive online sources, e.g., forums, Facebook groups
96.   Other (please specify)
11.   I did not receive any support *(EXCLUSIVE)

98.   (Don't know) / Not sure*(EXCLUSIVE)
99.   (Refused) / Prefer not to say*(EXCLUSIVE)

*(C4=1-3, EXPERIENCED BREAK-UP, SEPARATION OR DIVORCE)
C6_new   Which, if any, of the following affected your ability to access **valuable** support?

Please select all that apply.
(MULTIPLE RESPONSE)
(READ OUT)

6.   I received adequate support from others
1.   Lack of understanding from chosen support person/s
2.   Isolation
3.   Lack of motivation/desire
4.   Expense of service
5.   Location of service
7.   Feeling embarrassed, afraid or ashamed
8.   I managed on my own
96.   Other (please specify)

98.   (Don't know) / Not sure*(EXCLUSIVE)
99.   (Refused) / Prefer not to say*(EXCLUSIVE)

*(C4=1-3, EXPERIENCED BREAK-UP, SEPARATION OR DIVORCE)
C6a   With regard to your former partner, over the past 6 months, how often have you:

(STATEMENTS) (RANDOMISE)
*(ONL: DISPLAY FULL GRID)

    a.   Felt hostile or hateful towards him/her/them?
    b.   Had angry disagreements with him/her/them?
    c.   Avoided or kept away from him/her/them?

    (RESPONSE FRAME) (READ OUT)

    1.   Often
    2.   Sometimes
    3.   Not often / never

    98.   (Don't know) / Not sure
    99.   (Refused) / Prefer not to say

*(C4=1-3, EXPERIENCED BREAK-UP, SEPARATION OR DIVORCE)
C6b   Do the impacts of this break-up, separation or divorce still impact you today?

    1.   Yes
    2.   No

    98.   (Don't know) / Not sure
    99.   (Refused) / Prefer not to say

*(C6b=1, YES THE IMPACTS OF THIS BREAK-UP, SEPARATION OR DIVORCE STILL IMPACT YOU TODAY)
C7_NEW   What are the ongoing effects or challenges you have experienced as a result of the break-up, separation, or divorce?
    Please select all the apply

    (MULTIPLE RESPONSE)

    1.   Feelings of sadness or loneliness
    2.   My confidence / self-esteem is lower
    3.   Ongoing sadness / regret around the relationship ending
    4.   Difficulty in connecting with others
    5.   Reduced trust in others
    6.   Reduced interest in future relationships
    7.   Negative impacts on mental health
    8.   Difficulty in communicating with others
    9.   Ongoing negative or problematic behaviour from the previous partner
    10.   Reliance on alcohol, drugs etc.
    11.   Financial impacts
    12.   Challenges with shared parenting arrangements
    13.   Negative impacts on children / other family members
    14.   Feelings of guilt or shame
    15.   Feeling angry or resentful

    96.   Other effects or challenges (please specify)
    97.   I have not had any ongoing challenges^ (EXCLUSIVE)

    98.   (Don't know) / Not sure
    99.   (Refused) / Prefer not to say

*(C6b=1, YES THE IMPACTS OF THIS BREAK-UP, SEPARATION OR DIVORCE STILL IMPACT YOU TODAY)
C8_NEW   What have you done to manage the impact/s of the break-up, separation, or divorce?
    Please select all the apply

    (MULTIPLE RESPONSE)

    1.   Talking with friends / family
    2.   Taking time to heal
    3.   Focusing on distractions e.g. hobbies, work, etc.
    4.   Communicating openly with previous partner
    5.   Seeking professional help e.g. Counsellor, GP, Mediator

6. Self-care practises
7. Faith / spirituality
8. Finding new friends / hobbies
9. Accepting the situation / letting go
96. Did other things to manage (please specify)
97. Have not done anything to manage it^ (EXCLUSIVE)

98. (Don't know) / Not sure
99. (Refused) / Prefer not to say

*(C6=1, YES THE IMPACTS OF THIS BREAK-UP, SEPARATION OR DIVORCE STILL IMPACT YOU TODAY)
C9_NEW   Did anything good come from the break-up, separation, or divorce?
Please select all the apply

(MULTIPLE RESPONSE)

1. My confidence / self-esteem improved
2. My mental health improved
3. I was able to pursue new experiences
4. I have a sense of increased independence / freedom
5. My finances improved
6. Stronger relationships with others
7. A friendship developed with my previous partner
8. I developed a new relationship
9. A sense of safety
96. Other positive things (please specify)
97. Nothing good came from it

98. (Don't know) / Not sure
99. (Refused) / Prefer not to say

SECTION D: ABOUT YOU

*(ALL)
INTROD   Next, we would like to ask some general questions about yourself.

*(ALL)
D1   To what extent do you agree or disagree with the following statements?

(STATEMENTS) (RANDOMISE)
*(ONL: DISPLAY FULL GRID)

a. In most ways my life is close to my ideal
b. The conditions of my life are excellent
c. I am satisfied with life
d. So far I have gotten the most important things I want in life
e. If I could live my life over, I would change almost nothing

(RESPONSE FRAME) (READ OUT)

1. Strongly agree
2. Agree
3. Neither agree nor disagree
4. Disagree
5. Strongly disagree

98. (Don't know) / Not sure
99. (Refused) / Prefer not to say

*(ALL)
D2   To what extent do you agree or disagree with the following statements?

(STATEMENTS) (RANDOMISE)
*(ONL: DISPLAY FULL GRID)

a. I feel loved
b. I miss having people around
c. I experience a general sense of emptiness
d. There are many people I can count on completely
e. Often, I feel rejected
f. There are plenty of people that I can lean on in case of trouble
g. There are enough people that I feel close to

(RESPONSE FRAME) (READ OUT)

1. Yes, I agree
2. More or less
3. No, I disagree

98. (Don't know) / Not sure
99. (Refused) / Prefer not to say

*(ALL)
D3   On a scale of one to seven, where one is strongly disagree and seven is strongly agree, to what extent do you agree or disagree with the following statement?

(STATEMENT)

a. I often feel very lonely

(RESPONSE FRAME)

1. 1 - Strongly disagree
2. 2
3. 3
4. 4
5. 5
6. 6
7. 7 - Strongly agree

98. (Don't know) / Not sure
99. (Refused) / Prefer not to say

SECTION E: WIDER COMMUNITY RELATIONSHIPS

*(ALL)
INTROE   So far, we have asked lots of questions about relationships you have with individuals. In this last section, we'd now like to ask about the relationships that you have with groups of people and the wider community.

*(ALL)
E1   From the following list, please select which, if any, of the following groups play an important role in your life.

        Please select all that apply.
        (MULTIPLE RESPONSE)
        (READ OUT)

        1. Colleagues IF NECESSARY: Includes current or prior colleagues
        2. Community group/s
        3. Environment/gardening group/s
        4. Family group/s IF NECESSARY: Refers to a family unit
        5. Friendship group/s
        6. Neighbourhood group/s
        7. Online group/s, e.g., forums, Facebook groups
        8. Political party/organisation/s
        9. Religious group/s
        10. Sporting group/s
        11. Union/s
        12. Music or art group/s

13.   Book club or group/s
96.   Other (please specify)
97.   Groups do not play an important role in my life *(EXCLUSIVE)

98.   (Don't know) / Not sure *(EXCLUSIVE)
99.   (Refused) / Prefer not to say*(EXCLUSIVE)

*(ALL)
E7   Who would you turn to first for the following situations?

(STATEMENTS)

a)   If you needed help with a household or garden job that you couldn't do yourself
b)   If you needed help around your home because you were sick
c)   If you felt a bit down or depressed and wanted to talk about it
d)   To enjoy a pleasant social occasion with

(RESPONSE FRAME)

1.   Your most important, meaningful relationship: (INSERT RESPONSE FROM B1. IF B1= 98 OR 99 JUST DISPLAY 'Your most important, meaningful relationship')
2.   Somebody else

98.   (Don't know) / Not sure
99.   (Refused) / Prefer not to say